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Accreditation Report
for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units

Department: Medicine

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 15/06/2026

Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης
ΕΣΠΑ 2021-2027
Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και Κοινωνική Συνοχή
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Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** 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 Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Law 4653/2020:

1. CHRISTOPHIDES GEORGE (Chair)
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Imperial College London
   (Institution of origin)

2. Roussakis Andreas Antonios
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Imperial College London / Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
   (Institution of origin)

3. SACHINIDIS AGAPIOS
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   Institut für Neurophysiologie, Zentrum Physiologie, Medizinische Fakultät, Universität zu Köln
   (Institution of origin)

4. Savvopoulos Nikolaos
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   University of Patras
   (Institution of origin)

5. Soultanas Panagiotis
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   School of Chemistry, University of Nottingham
   (Institution of origin)

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Brief reference to the Panel preparation for the postgraduate study programme review, as well as to the documentation provided and considered by the Panel. Dates of the review, review, meetings held, and any additional information regarding the procedure, as appropriate.

The External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) conducted the accreditation review between 11/05/2026 and 16/05/2026 according to the official HAHE timetable for the four postgraduate study programmes of the School of Medicine, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

A joint opening session was held on Monday 11/05/2026 with the Directors of the four PSPs, the Head of the School of Medicine, MODIP representatives and OMEA members. During this meeting, following an introduction by the Head of the Department, the Director of the ICU Nursing PSP presented the structure, aims and rationale of the programme, emphasising the increasing importance of specialised ICU nursing within the Greek healthcare system.

Prior to the review meetings, the Panel examined the programme proposal and curriculum, course descriptions and study guide, quality assurance material, internal regulations, titles of diploma theses, workload and assessment structures, and documentation relating to clinical activities and student support.

The Panel also considered the provided online material relating to facilities and educational infrastructure. The videos supplied primarily reflected the wider infrastructure of the School of Medicine and affiliated hospitals rather than programme-specific educational environments.

On Wednesday 13/05/2026, the Panel conducted separate meetings with representatives of the teaching staff, current students, graduates, and employers and social partners. All the meetings were constructive, collegial and open. The teaching staff included intensivists, anaesthesiologists, pulmonologists and senior ICU nursing staff from major hospitals. Students and graduates provided detailed information regarding workload, practical exposure, assessment methods and professional impact of the programme.

These meetings were followed by a private EEAP debrief to discuss the preliminary findings and a closure meeting with programme leadership and institutional representatives, where these preliminary findings were presented at a high level. The university, school and programme leadership were invited to comment on these preliminary findings., the Panel focused particularly on the distinction between postgraduate MSc education and

professional specialisation training, the balance between practical clinical training and research-oriented postgraduate learning, the structure and assessment of practical clinical exposure, the scholarly depth and methodological quality of diploma theses and the implementation of quality assurance and KPI monitoring processes.

Overall, the review process enabled the EEAP to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the strengths, operational characteristics, challenges and level of alignment of the PSP with the HAHE accreditation standards.

N.B. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mr Nikolaos Savvopoulos was not able to participate in the review, discussions, interviews, or preparation of the present report. His name nevertheless appears automatically in the system-generated form due to technical limitations of the HAHE platform.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

Brief overview of the postgraduate study programme with reference to the following: history, academic remit, duration of studies, qualification awarded, employment opportunities, orientation challenges or any other key background information. Short description of the home Department and Institution, with reference to student population, campus or any other related facts.

The PSP "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units" is a professionally oriented postgraduate programme offered by the School of Medicine of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and directed toward registered nurses involved in intensive care practice.

The programme addresses a major healthcare workforce need related to ICU nursing expertise and critical care management. Stakeholders strongly emphasised the programme's practical importance for the Greek healthcare system, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme has been operating for approximately eight years and admits approximately 25-30 students per cycle. It is delivered in Greek and structured over three semesters corresponding to 90 ECTS.

The curriculum combines theoretical teaching, tutorials, clinical exposure and a diploma thesis. The programme includes topics such as mechanical ventilation, emergency care, infection prevention, communication, ethics, management and ICU decision-making.

Teaching is primarily delivered in person and includes approximately 10 hours of weekly teaching during the main semesters, supplemented by tutorials and clinical activities. Students are typically practising nurses simultaneously working within demanding hospital or ICU environments.

The teaching staff include experienced intensivists, anaesthesiologists, pulmonologists and senior ICU nursing personnel with substantial practical expertise and international experience.

Students and graduates consistently described the programme as highly useful for their professional development, clinical confidence and participation in ICU decision-making. Several graduates also reported subsequent engagement with research activities or progression toward doctoral studies.

The principal strength of the programme lies in its strong clinical relevance, workforce alignment and close integration with ICU practice. However, the academic and research

identity of the programme currently appears less clearly articulated. While research methodology and dissertation work are included, the programme remains strongly practice-oriented and professionally focused. The programme therefore faces the important challenge of demonstrating more clearly that it functions not only as advanced professional specialisation training, but also as a coherent Level 7 MSc programme characterised by analytical depth, research competence and scholarly autonomy.

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 PSP “Specialisation in Intensive Care Unit Nursing” has established a formal quality assurance framework aligned with the institutional quality policy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Department of Medicine. The programme documentation includes internal regulations, annual quality objectives, student evaluation procedures, quality indicators, and mechanisms for internal review and monitoring.

The programme demonstrates a clear and socially important professional orientation addressing a major healthcare and workforce need within critical care nursing. The EEAP found strong evidence that the programme is highly valued by students, graduates, teaching staff, and stakeholders, particularly in relation to preparedness for ICU practice, professional confidence, communication within multidisciplinary teams, and decision-making in complex clinical environments.

The programme has operated for approximately eight years and admits around 25–30 students annually. The structure of 90 ECTS over three semesters, including a dedicated dissertation semester, provides a coherent postgraduate framework more consistent with conventional MSc structures than several other professionally oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP.

The EEAP also identified several positive educational features during the interviews. Students and graduates consistently described close interaction with faculty, constructive feedback on coursework, meaningful clinical relevance, and opportunities for broader professional development. The programme appears to integrate themes such as communication, ethics, burnout, patient-family interaction, and decision-making in ICU settings alongside technical and clinical content.

The dissertation portfolio appears more analytically and clinically oriented than in some other professionally focused PSPs reviewed during this accreditation process. Several thesis topics involve evidence-based clinical questions, ICU protocols, infection management, clinical audits, or applied healthcare research themes.

At the same time, the EEAP identified areas requiring further maturation. The programme does not yet systematically categorise and monitor dissertation types, methodological quality, publications, conference participation, or broader academic outcomes. While some graduates reported progression toward research activity or doctoral studies, these outcomes are not systematically analysed through formal KPIs.

The EEAP acknowledges the programme’s clarification that the awarded degree is an MSc in Critical Care Nursing and that the term ‘Εξειδίκευση’ is used in a descriptive rather than regulatory sense. Nevertheless, the Panel considers that, within the contemporary Greek healthcare context, the continued use of this

terminology may still create confusion with the recently established professional ICU nursing specialisation pathway.

II. Analysis

The programme demonstrates substantial strengths regarding professional relevance, workforce importance, educational coherence, and alignment with contemporary ICU nursing practice. The EEAP considers the programme to be one of the strongest professionally oriented PSPs reviewed during this accreditation process.

The programme benefits from a coherent target population, committed and experienced faculty, close links with ICU clinical environments, and a generally credible postgraduate structure. Compared with other clinically oriented PSPs, the 90 ECTS architecture, dedicated dissertation semester, and more continuous teaching engagement support stronger alignment with Level 7 postgraduate expectations.

Importantly, the programme demonstrates meaningful integration of theory and practice, including elements of evidence-based healthcare, clinical reasoning, communication, ethics, and reflective professional development. Graduates consistently described increased autonomy, confidence, and participation in clinical decision-making following completion of the programme.

Nevertheless, the EEAP considers that the principal strategic challenge moving forward concerns the strengthening and clearer articulation of the programme's research-intensive and scholarly postgraduate identity.

While the programme clearly exceeds the level of routine in-service professional training, aspects of the educational model remain predominantly practice-oriented and skills-focused. The research dimension appears variable and not yet fully mature or systematically embedded across all programme components.

The EEAP was encouraged by the generally stronger quality of dissertation themes compared with other professionally oriented PSPs. However, substantial variability in methodological depth likely remains, while narrative reviews continue to appear among dissertation outputs. The panel considers that narrative reviews alone do not consistently satisfy Level 7 MSc expectations unless embedded within rigorous methodological and analytical frameworks.

The programme would therefore benefit from clearer minimum methodological standards for dissertations and from progressively prioritising original clinical research, systematic reviews, quality improvement studies, and evidence-based analytical projects.

The EEAP notes the programme's clarification that original clinical research is generally encouraged and that some dissertation projects have resulted in

conference presentations and publications. However, these outcomes are not currently monitored through systematic programme-level KPIs.

The EEAP fully recognises the practical constraints associated with professionally active ICU nurses and appreciates the efforts of the programme to maintain accessibility for working clinicians operating under demanding shift systems. Nevertheless, Level 7 postgraduate education requires sustained scholarly engagement, continuous academic interaction, independent analytical work, and meaningful immersion in postgraduate learning activities. The programme should therefore continue strengthening mechanisms that support protected scholarly engagement, structured academic participation, and ongoing interaction between students and faculty throughout the duration of studies.

The EEAP also considers that the programme would benefit strategically from clearer differentiation between postgraduate academic MSc education, and formal professional ICU nursing specialisation pathways.

A title more clearly emphasising “Critical Care Nursing” or “Intensive Care Nursing” rather than “specialisation” may better reflect the intended postgraduate academic identity of the programme.

Finally, although quality assurance structures formally exist and appear operational, the use of KPI data for strategic programme development remains insufficiently mature. Research outputs, dissertation characteristics, graduate trajectories, conference participation, and scholarly outcomes should be monitored more systematically and incorporated into quality improvement processes.

III. Conclusions

The PSP demonstrates a coherent and professionally important postgraduate educational framework with strong workforce relevance, substantial clinical value, and generally credible alignment with Level 7 MSc expectations. Compared with several other professionally oriented PSPs, the programme demonstrates stronger structural coherence, more credible workload allocation, closer integration between theory and practice, and clearer evidence of postgraduate educational value. The principal challenge moving forward concerns not the legitimacy or importance of the field itself, but the further strengthening and operationalisation of the programme’s research-oriented and scholarly postgraduate identity. Particular areas requiring continued development include dissertation methodological consistency, systematic monitoring of research outputs and academic outcomes, stronger operational use of KPIs, clearer distinction from professional specialisation pathways, and enhancement of sustained scholarly engagement throughout the programme.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Further strengthen the research-oriented and analytical postgraduate identity of the programme.

Establish clearer minimum methodological standards for diploma theses and progressively prioritise original clinical research, evidence-based analytical projects, systematic reviews, and quality-improvement studies over narrative reviews.

Systematically collect, categorise, and analyse dissertation outputs, publications, conference participation, doctoral progression, and broader graduate outcomes as part of KPI-driven quality assurance processes.

Demonstrate more explicit operational use of quality assurance data and student feedback in strategic programme development and curriculum refinement.

Continue strengthening sustained scholarly engagement throughout the programme through structured assignments, journal-based discussion, reflective activities, evidence-based learning exercises, and continuous faculty-student interaction.

Further reinforce the distinction between postgraduate MSc education and professional ICU nursing specialisation pathways.

Consider revising the programme title in ways that more clearly reflect its intended postgraduate academic identity and differentiate it from formal professional specialisation programmes.

Continue strengthening structured research support, methodological training, and evidence-based clinical inquiry across all programme components.

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 "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units" was designed in the academic year 2018-19 (Government Gazette Issue B' 4088/19.09.2018) and is run by the School of Medicine at AUTH. The structure and organization of this PSP fully align with current legislation (Law 4957/2022, Government Gazette 141 A'). The PSP was subsequently amended in accordance with updated legislation (Law 4957/2022) and was approved by the AUTH Senate in 2024 (FEK 5634/ B'/10-10-2024).

The PSP is delivered in 3 (13 week) semesters, each carrying 30 ECTS thus totalling 90 ECTS. Semester 1 entails 6 compulsory subjects (5 subjects are worth 6 ECTS each and 1 subject is worth 12 ECTS), semester 2 entails 8 compulsory subjects (6 subjects are worth 3 ECTS each and 2 subjects 6 ECTS each), with semester 3 dedicated to the preparation of the diploma thesis (30 ECTS). Exam assessments are carried out through multiple choice questions and/or written assignments. The whole PSP is delivered in Greek, and the diploma thesis is also written in Greek.

Courses are taught in person, sequentially in 6 hours per week during the semester. Exams are conducted at the end of the semester for all the subjects of that semester in a single day. The maximum duration of studies cannot exceed 6 semesters. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. military service, illness etc) temporary suspension of studies, of not more than 2 consecutive semesters, may be granted. Working students may be given the option of part-time study which cannot exceed twice the time required for full-time studies. This is done after request by the student and approval by the School Assembly. Tuition fees have been set at 2,000 euros. There is, however, the possibility for waiving the tuition fees up to 30% of students in a single cohort, according to the relevant law, based upon personal income and social factors. The PSP aims to recruit 25-30 students per cohort. Lessons are conducted either at the Medical School of AUTh or at the Papanikolaou Hospital.

II. Analysis

This is mainly a clinical training PSP aiming to promote knowledge and train specialized scientific personnel in intensive care units. It has been created and operates according to the correct official processes as defined by relevant legislation. There are some links to research, but the clinical training is the overwhelming aspect of this PSP, preparing nurses to manage life-threatening problems for patients, and cope with complex and extreme situations in ICUs.

Nurses are equipped with highly specialized knowledge and skills to provide not only appropriate ICU care but also to manage complex psychological challenges that often arise in ICUs. The skills required in ICUs include the management of a broad range of pathological conditions, the setting of clear priorities in patient care, the continuous assessment of clinical progress, and the administration of specialized and demanding therapeutic treatment with precise and effective care. The PSP curriculum does cover all these topics, and the anticipated student workload is in line with the ECTS level 7, and the European and National qualification frameworks.

The student guide is comprehensive and informative. However, subject outlines need to be more detailed and informative e.g. include the percent contributions of different exam elements for each subject, where appropriate. The structure, content, organisation and teaching methods of this PSP are oriented towards deepening knowledge and acquiring the corresponding skills to apply this knowledge by nurses in ICUs, but the research character could be strengthened further. The EEAP has not seen evidence of direct and meaningful participation of social partners in annual monitoring and curriculum updating. However, the PSP students are actively involved in this process through evaluation of teaching with electronic questionnaires at the end of each subject. This is in accordance with the AUTH's quality assurance policy.

Teaching staff are enthusiastic and dedicated with appropriate specialized knowledge and skilled to successfully deliver this PSP. A single day dedicated to exams for all the subjects appears to be rather challenging and demanding for students. Exams seem to be predominantly through MCQs.

III. Conclusions

This is primarily a professional skills PSP providing useful training and knowledge to the nursing community involved in ICUs. There are some links with academic research, but the emphasis is on providing theoretical knowledge and relevant practical/clinical training. It is well organized and delivered by skilled professionals and expert academics.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

More direct and meaningful involvement of social partners in annual course review and updating.

The annual programme revisions and corrective actions, if appropriate, must be made more visible to the public via the PSP website.

Update subject outlines with more accurate information e.g. include % contributions of different exam elements to the final mark, specify whether or not a subject could be available to Erasmus students etc.

Strengthen links with research.

Consider delivering some selective subjects initially in English to try and attract international students and/or professionals who might be interested in specific subjects rather than the whole PSP.

Divide some exams in separate days rather than a single day at the end of each semester and make exams more varied beyond MCQs to align closer with problem-based, skills-based learning and modern assessment methods.

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 programme exposes students to a learning environment that is shaped by a diverse group of educational activities. Students are encouraged to engage with original research and are provided with opportunities to contribute to the development of new scientific knowledge. By the end of the course, students are supported to transition from theoretical instruction to independent research work.

Assessments are both formal and informal. Assessment methods include exams, presentations, the analysis of published academic work, and the writing-up of a thesis in a topic of choice. The Course Director and Leads periodically seek for student feedback and reflect on those remarks to consider the possibility of making changes in the programme. The Course Director and Leads consider the views of the students throughout the academic year. However, the implementation of the lessons that they learn remains only partially formalised signalling that student feedback mechanisms are rather underdeveloped.

The main outcome measure of student achievement is reflected in end-of-semester exams. Other measures include data obtained through questionnaires. Combined, these methods provide formative insight, although their scope appears somewhat limited.

This programme supports the development of scientific and professional competencies. Students are exposed to various laboratory methodologies, activities that promote critical and analytical thinking, scientific communication (both in writing and verbally), and interdisciplinary collaboration. The research-focused arm of the programme encourages a degree of independence and enables students to develop their problem-solving skills in preparation for further academic studies, if they wish to continue with a PhD and/or a pursue a research-focused career.

Students described during the interviews a generally positive educational experience that is characterised by active participation in laboratories, scientific discussions, and involvement in original research. However, evidence regarding formal mechanisms supporting student participation in broader pedagogical planning and the improvement of the programme per se is in development.

The EEAP members found limited explicit evidence regarding the systematic publication of detailed assessment criteria and grading expectations across all modules and research components. The EEAP members found limited evidence regarding the systematic implementation of regular student satisfaction surveys designed to evaluate teaching effectiveness, supervision quality, and overall student experience at programme level. The programme provided evidence that academic advising, student appeals, complaints procedures and assessment standardisation are currently being strengthened. However, the implementation and programme-wide operational maturity of these mechanisms remain variable.

Students as well as graduates reported positive experiences regarding supervisor accessibility, laboratory integration, and peer collaboration. Yet, support mechanisms appear to rely to a considerable extent on individual laboratory practices rather than to harmonised programme-wide structures.

II. Analysis

The programme demonstrates its strengths in research-based scientific training and provides students with access to participate in a diverse academic environment. This model effectively allows students to reach independence, acquire competence and self-confidence.

The large number of lecturers contributes to scientific diversity but at the same time may reduce coherence and indirectly impact on the quality of teaching delivery. Similarly, the dependence on individual supervisors/laboratories may create a high intra-student variability in what students experience limiting a part of the programme consistency. Overall, the programme demonstrates a solid base to enable substantial research outcomes, noting that certain domains specific to student-centred learning may remain less mature.

III. Conclusions

The programme provides a research-orientated educational environment that supports the development of advanced scientific and research competencies. Yet, research engagement is not consistently delivered at scale. Students benefit from laboratory integration, active participation in research, and positive supervision. However, the implementation of student-centred learning principles remains only partially formalised at programme level. The EEAP concludes that the programme performs well in research-based scientific training, and that further pedagogical and organisational development could strengthen to ensure a stronger student-learning approach.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Strengthen continuous and formative assessment practices.

Improve pedagogical co-ordination across modules and lecturers.

Establish programme-wide supervision guidelines, milestones, and feedback expectations that will be included explicitly in the Course Guide.

Implement a higher level of progression monitoring in a systematic way.

Strengthen formal student feedback and satisfaction monitoring mechanisms.

Formalise academic advising and student appeals procedures at programme level.

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 programme has established formal admission procedures and clearly defined progression rules in accordance with institutional and national regulations. Admission is restricted to graduates of Nursing departments, with an annual intake of approximately 25-30 students.

The programme follows a conventional three-semester structure corresponding to 90 ECTS, including two taught semesters and a dedicated dissertation semester. This structure provides a clearer and more academically credible postgraduate progression model than several other professionally oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP.

The programme includes formal academic advising structures and progression monitoring mechanisms. Students and graduates reported generally good accessibility and support from faculty members, while several graduates described progression toward research activity, protocol development within hospitals, conference participation, or consideration of doctoral studies following completion of the programme.

Students consistently described the programme as professionally valuable and clinically relevant. They particularly highlighted increased confidence in ICU decision-making, communication with physicians, management of critically ill patients, and broader understanding of evidence-based ICU practice.

At the same time, the EEAP identified certain areas requiring further strengthening. While dissertation supervision and progression monitoring appear functional overall, the programme does not yet systematically categorise and

monitor dissertation types, methodological quality, publication outcomes, or broader research trajectories of graduates.

In addition, although the programme demonstrates substantially greater continuity of engagement than several other professionally oriented PSPs, most students remain fully employed within demanding ICU environments with rotating shift schedules. Maintaining sustained postgraduate scholarly engagement under these conditions remains a continuing challenge for the programme.

II. Analysis

The programme demonstrates a coherent and generally well-structured framework for student admission, progression, and certification. The focused target population of nursing graduates contributes positively to curricular coherence and alignment between programme aims and student background.

The 90 ECTS architecture and the dedicated dissertation semester support the credibility of workload allocation and progression at Level 7. Compared with more compressed professionally oriented PSPs, the EEAP considers the workload structure of the ICU Nursing programme substantially more convincing and compatible with postgraduate study expectations.

The programme also demonstrates stronger continuity of teaching, faculty interaction, and cohort identity than several other clinically oriented PSPs reviewed during this accreditation process. Students described regular in-person engagement, coursework, tutorials, feedback processes, and close interaction with teaching staff.

The EEAP notes positively that the programme appears to support development not only of technical ICU competence, but also of communication skills, reflective practice, clinical prioritisation, decision-making under pressure, and multidisciplinary interaction, all of which are relevant to Level 7 professional postgraduate education.

Nevertheless, further strengthening would be beneficial regarding consistency of dissertation standards, systematic monitoring of research outcomes, and structured assessment of postgraduate analytical competencies. While several dissertations demonstrate clear evidence of analytical and evidence-based clinical inquiry, the academic depth and methodological sophistication of thesis work appear somewhat variable.

The EEAP also considers that continued attention is required to ensure that the programme maintains a clear distinction between postgraduate MSc education and advanced in-service professional training. The programme is strongest when clinical practice is explicitly integrated with evidence-based reasoning, critical analysis, research literacy, and reflective scholarly learning.

The EEAP recognises the practical constraints associated with professionally active ICU nurses and fully understands the operational need for flexibility. Nevertheless, Level 7 postgraduate education requires sustained scholarly engagement, independent study, analytical reflection, and continuous academic interaction beyond acquisition of practical skills alone. The programme should therefore continue strengthening mechanisms that support protected scholarly engagement, research activity, and continuous postgraduate academic participation throughout the duration of studies.

III. Conclusions

The programme demonstrates satisfactory compliance with Principle 4. Admission procedures, progression rules, workload allocation, and certification arrangements are appropriately organised, transparent, and generally coherent with postgraduate Level 7 expectations. The 90 ECTS architecture, dedicated dissertation semester, regular teaching structure, and strong professional relevance collectively support the credibility of the programme as a postgraduate MSc. The programme appears stronger and more academically coherent than several other professionally oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP. However, further strengthening of dissertation monitoring, research progression, analytical assessment, and sustained scholarly engagement would further reinforce its postgraduate academic profile and Level 7 identity.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Further strengthen monitoring of dissertation quality, methodological rigour, and consistency of postgraduate learning outcomes.

Systematically monitor and analyse dissertation categories, research outputs, conference participation, publication outcomes, and doctoral progression.

Continue strengthening structured academic advising and support for research literacy, evidence-based practice, and critical analytical skills.

Further develop assessment methods beyond predominantly MCQ-based examinations,

including analytical coursework, case-based assessment, reflective assignments, and applied evidence-based exercises.

Continue strengthening mechanisms that support sustained scholarly engagement and protected academic activity throughout the programme, particularly considering the demanding clinical schedules of ICU nurses.

Maintain and further reinforce the distinction between postgraduate academic education and purely professional or technical specialisation training.

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 programme appears to follow a structured recruitment approach based primarily on academic qualifications and professional experience. External lecturers are selected based on academic qualifications, evaluation of CVs, and their capacity to contribute to both theoretical and practical components of the curriculum.

The teaching body consists of a diverse group of teaching staff (reported to be 26 academics) from AUTH and collaborating institutions. The group includes staff across different career stages and backgrounds This comment acknowledges the historic limitations of the Greek academic ecosystem to not have been highly inclusive in recruitment in the past decades.

Faculty members presented themselves as active researchers in the interviews. By reviewing individual CVs and personal professional pages (e.g. Google Schoolar profiles), several faculty members appear to participate in research projects and various scientific activities. These activities may contribute to maintaining academic engagement with the programme. However, there is rather limited evidence regarding formal programme-specific mechanisms that aim to improve the pedagogical skills of those involved in teaching.

Many teaching staff participate in research collaborations and demonstrate some degree of mobility. Nevertheless, staff mobility appears to rely primarily on individual initiatives and less on formally structured mobility actions such as Erasmus+ opportunities.

Teaching workload allocation was clearly communicated to the EEAP members. Although the workload appears demanding, faculty members maintain research productivity and continued participation in research. Faculty members incorporate elements of current research developments and global trends and appear to update aspects of lecture content and supervision.

Teaching quality is primarily evaluated through the completion of formal questionnaires by students. Student participation rates (in these evaluations) were deemed as moderate by the EEAP members who questioned the reasons for feedback data not being complete/being missing.

Although the programme has a broad portfolio of research studies across multiple scientific domains both clinical and non-clinical, the EEAP members could not identify a single point of scientific focus that would facilitate programme priority-setting.

II. Analysis

The programme is supported by academically qualified staff who contribute to teaching and research activities across the programme. Recruitment procedures appear merit-based, while the integration of research appears to support the academic experience of students.

Faculty members maintain varying levels of research activity despite demanding professional responsibilities. Participation in scientific collaborations and conferences suggests some degree of academic networking and mobility. The programme benefits from a large, experienced and research-active teaching team whose academic qualifications and research profiles are fully appropriate for delivery of the PSP. The areas requiring further development relate primarily to programme-level strategic coordination, staff development planning, structured mobility opportunities and systematic use of evaluation data.

III. Conclusions

The programme benefits from a large and research-active teaching team who independently, and as a group, demonstrate links between teaching and research activities. Further development is needed regarding the formal strategy of the programme aiming for increased staff mobility and student participation in evaluations.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Categorise the large group of teaching staff into [a]. a core team (course Leads) and [b]. lecturers from other institutions/any invited speakers, whereas appropriate.

Develop a formal programme-specific research strategy with well-defined priorities.

Strengthen the support for mobility for staff including the possibility of short exchange programmes with colleagues overseas (e.g. Erasmus+ joint modules, summer schools etc).

Enhance formal pedagogical development opportunities for teaching staff.

Enhance the role and involvement of visiting lecturers beyond occasional or limited teaching contributions; clear role descriptions and expectations.

Monitor and periodically ensure that teaching workload is as evenly as possible distributed to ensure that individual members of staff (core team) have a healthy weekly job plan.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR 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, 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 programme benefits from integration within the Medical School (Department of Medicine) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and its associated ICU clinical infrastructure. The PSP appears to have access to specialised ICU environments, experienced multidisciplinary teaching staff, administrative support services, digital educational systems, and broader institutional student support mechanisms.

The curriculum includes clinically relevant and professionally important themes covering respiratory support, infection management, haemodynamic monitoring,

trauma and burns, nutrition, ethics, communication, patient-family interaction, and complex ICU decision-making. Students and graduates consistently described the programme as highly relevant to real ICU practice and reported that it strengthened both their professional confidence and their participation in multidisciplinary clinical decision-making.

The programme appears to provide stronger continuity of student engagement and faculty interaction than several other clinically oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP. Teaching is delivered primarily in person, students described regular contact with faculty, and graduates highlighted the accessibility and supportiveness of teaching staff.

Students also reported receiving feedback on coursework and assignments, while several graduates described opportunities for conference participation, protocol development, research activity, and broader professional development following completion of the programme.

At the same time, the EEAP identified areas requiring further clarification and standardisation. While clinical exposure and practical activities constitute a major strength of the programme, the exact structure, supervision model, competency framework, and assessment of practical training were not always fully clear from the documentation or interviews.

Research and methodological support structures also appear less mature and systematically organised than the clinical and practical dimensions of the programme. In addition, alumni engagement, mobility opportunities, and structured stakeholder participation in mentoring or educational activities remain relatively informal and underdeveloped.

II. Analysis

The EEAP considers the learning environment and infrastructure generally appropriate and substantially supportive of a professionally oriented postgraduate programme in ICU nursing. The programme clearly benefits from strong integration within clinically active ICU environments and from access to experienced clinicians, nurses, and multidisciplinary healthcare professionals.

The practical and clinically applied nature of the curriculum constitutes one of the programme's major strengths. Students appear to gain meaningful exposure to complex ICU environments, communication challenges, ethical dilemmas, and multidisciplinary care processes relevant to modern intensive care nursing.

Compared with several other professionally oriented PSPs reviewed during this accreditation process, the programme also demonstrates stronger continuity of teaching, more regular faculty-student interaction, and a more cohesive educational environment.

Nevertheless, the EEAP considers that further strengthening is required regarding the standardisation and assessment of practical learning experiences. While students reported both observational and hands-on activities, the programme would benefit from clearer competency-based frameworks, harmonised practical learning objectives, and more explicit documentation of how practical performance is supervised and assessed across clinical environments.

The panel also considers that research support structures require further development in order to reinforce the MSc-level scholarly identity of the programme. Although several students and graduates described involvement in research activity, protocol development, dissertation work, and conference participation, methodological support and research mentoring appear relatively dependent on individual supervisors and local arrangements rather than on fully structured programme-wide processes.

The EEAP additionally recognises the substantial practical constraints faced by ICU nurses working under demanding rotating shift systems. The programme has understandably adopted a flexible educational approach in order to support accessibility for working professionals. Nevertheless, Level 7 postgraduate education requires sustained scholarly engagement, reflective learning, analytical development, and continuous academic interaction. Continued strengthening of structured tutorials, simulations, reflective discussions, journal-based learning, and research-oriented activities would further support development of a stronger postgraduate scholarly community.

The EEAP also identified unrealised potential for stronger integration of alumni, stakeholders, and mobility opportunities into the broader educational ecosystem of the programme. Graduates and stakeholders appeared motivated to contribute more actively to mentoring, research collaboration, professional networking, and curriculum development.

III. Conclusions

The programme demonstrates substantial compliance with Principle 6. It benefits from strong clinical infrastructure, professionally relevant educational resources, committed faculty, and meaningful integration within ICU clinical environments. The PSP appears particularly strong regarding workforce relevance, practical clinical orientation, and faculty accessibility. Compared with several other clinically oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP, the programme provides a more cohesive and continuous educational experience. The principal areas requiring further strengthening concern standardisation and assessment of clinical training, structured research and methodological support, sustained postgraduate scholarly engagement, and more formal integration of mentoring, alumni participation, stakeholder involvement, and mobility opportunities. Overall, the programme provides a supportive and professionally valuable learning environment that would benefit from further maturation of its postgraduate academic and scholarly support structures.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

More clearly define and document the structure, supervision, learning objectives, and competency assessment of clinical placements and practical educational activities.

Further strengthen competency-based practical assessment and ensure more consistent clinical educational experiences across all students and participating ICU environments.

Continue strengthening active-learning approaches including simulations, reflective clinical discussion, case-based learning, and problem-solving activities.

Further enhance research mentoring, methodological support, scientific writing guidance, and structured evidence-based learning activities throughout the programme.

Continue strengthening mechanisms that support sustained scholarly engagement and postgraduate academic interaction throughout the duration of studies, particularly considering the demanding professional schedules of ICU nurses.

Develop more formal alumni and stakeholder engagement structures supporting mentoring, networking, curriculum development, and professional development activities.

Further promote mobility opportunities, conference participation, and broader international engagement within the field of intensive care nursing education.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EEAP conducted a thorough assessment of the documents delivered by HAHE on the information management policy of the MSc programme in "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units" at the Department of Medicine of AUTH. The representatives of the PSP provided all the necessary documents to the EEAP and extensive discussions took place during the accreditation meetings.

The programme uses the AUTH Student Information System (SIS), a fully integrated, multi-module platform that manages the entire student lifecycle, including application and enrolment (online applications, admission tracking), academic records (grades, certifications, thesis management), course and examination management (scheduling, attendance, grading), quality assurance

procedures (anonymous student evaluations), and integration with national systems (e.g. OPESPA via API).

This system ensures administrative efficiency, data integrity, and auditability across all stages of study.

The programme also leverages a broader ecosystem of institutional platforms, including MODIP QMS, as a central hub for quality data, the IKEE Repository for research outputs, WebResCom for research project and grant management, hybrid learning infrastructure supporting blended teaching, multimedia production and streaming systems, and broader institutional accessibility and digital support services.

According to the submitted documentation, the programme generates analytical reports covering academic statistics, course evaluations, student theses, faculty activity, and programme-specific KPIs.

II. Analysis

The EEAP considers the technical and administrative infrastructure supporting information management within the programme to be robust, functional, and appropriately integrated within the wider institutional systems of AUTH. The programme appears capable of collecting substantial quantitative and administrative information regarding student progression, evaluations, dissertations, and educational activity.

The existence of institutional systems supporting electronic administration, quality monitoring, student evaluations, and academic management constitutes a positive aspect of the programme's operation.

However, despite this strong technical infrastructure, the strategic and programme-specific use of data remains less mature in several important areas.

In particular, the EEAP identified limited evidence that programme-level data are systematically analysed and operationalised to support monitoring of Level 7 learning outcomes, dissertation quality and methodological depth, research productivity, publication outputs, conference participation, graduate trajectories, or broader academic progression.

This issue became particularly evident during discussions regarding diploma theses. While dissertation activity appears substantial, the programme does not yet systematically categorise and monitor dissertation types (e.g. original research, systematic reviews, narrative reviews), publication outcomes, conference participation, or subsequent academic impact. As a result, these data are not yet fully incorporated into KPI-driven quality assurance and strategic programme development processes.

Similarly, although student evaluations are collected regularly, the EEAP found less evidence of clearly documented feedback loops demonstrating how evaluation outcomes systematically inform curriculum redesign, educational improvement, or strategic planning.

The programme also remains relatively limited regarding systematic monitoring of mobility, internationalisation, and broader European engagement activities.

Overall, the panel considers that the programme possesses a strong technical information management foundation but would benefit from more systematic programme-level analytical use of data in support of continuous quality enhancement and strategic academic development.

III. Conclusions

The PSP has established a robust, technically advanced, and well-integrated information management infrastructure supporting administrative and academic monitoring across the student lifecycle.

However, despite this strong technical foundation, the strategic use of programme-level data remains insufficiently developed in several important areas. In particular, the programme would benefit from more systematic monitoring and analysis of dissertation quality and categories, research outputs, graduate progression, conference participation, publication activity, student-centred learning outcomes, and the operational impact of quality assurance processes.

The programme would also benefit from stronger incorporation of internationalisation, mobility, and broader academic outcome indicators into its information management and strategic quality assurance processes.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Systematically collect, categorise, and analyse dissertation outputs, including original research projects, systematic reviews, publications, conference participation, and broader academic outcomes.

Strengthen the use of KPI-driven quality assurance processes to support evidence-based curriculum development and strategic programme improvement.

Establish clearer documented feedback loops demonstrating how student evaluations and programme data lead to specific educational modifications and quality enhancement actions.

Further develop monitoring of graduate trajectories, doctoral progression, research activity, and professional outcomes.

Continue strengthening monitoring and documentation of mobility opportunities, international collaborations, and broader European engagement activities.

Consider developing more accessible public reporting of selected programme indicators and quality assurance activities to strengthen transparency and stakeholder engagement.

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 EEAP conducted a thorough assessment of the public information policy of the MSc programme "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units" at the Department of Medicine of AUTH, based on the content and structure of its official website: https://websites.auth.gr/critcarenursing/.

The website is available in Greek, while the English version remains relatively limited. The PSP provides documentation outlining the programme's structure, duration, objectives, and other essential elements required for a postgraduate MSc programme.

Key information regarding the programme's internal quality assurance framework is publicly available. The website is integrated within the Faculty of Medicine and broader AUTH digital environment, facilitating access to additional resources such as library services, study guides, and administrative support systems.

The website includes information regarding programme regulations, student conduct, academic advising, research ethics, study regulations, thesis preparation, curriculum structure, and course organisation.

Communication with students appears effective and well organised, with course content and administrative information accessible through email communication and the programme's digital platforms.

II. Analysis

The EEAP considers that the programme provides satisfactory basic public information regarding its structure, regulations, and operation. The website

contains the core information expected for a postgraduate programme and supports transparency regarding the main organisational and educational aspects of the PSP.

However, compared with leading European postgraduate programmes at Level 7, the website remains relatively static and operational rather than strategically developed as a comprehensive academic communication platform.

Several important elements would benefit from clearer presentation and stronger organisation, including explicit programme learning outcomes, Level 7 competencies and graduate attributes, clearer mapping of courses and ECTS allocations, dissertation expectations, and broader information regarding research activity and academic opportunities within the programme.

The EEAP also identified limited publicly available information regarding graduate outcomes, research outputs, publications, conference participation, programme KPIs, and evidence demonstrating the broader academic and professional impact of the programme.

Internationalisation is currently underrepresented within the public information strategy. The English-language content remains limited, while mobility opportunities, international collaborations, Erasmus+ activities, and broader European engagement are not prominently communicated.

The programme would additionally benefit from more dynamic public presentation of its academic identity, educational philosophy, student experience, and professional impact. This is particularly important for a programme seeking to maintain a clear distinction between postgraduate MSc education and professional specialisation training.

III. Conclusions

The programme provides satisfactory core public information regarding its organisation, regulations, and educational structure, and therefore demonstrates substantial compliance with Principle 8.

Nevertheless, the website and broader public communication strategy remain relatively limited in terms of strategic presentation, international visibility, and communication of the programme's postgraduate academic identity and outcomes.

The programme would benefit from a more modern, structured, and academically oriented digital presence that more clearly reflects its Level 7 educational objectives, research and scholarly activities, graduate outcomes, and broader academic and professional impact.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Further develop the website structure and organisation in order to present more clearly programme learning outcomes, Level 7 competencies, curriculum structure and ECTS distribution, dissertation expectations, and graduate attributes.

Expand the English-language content and strengthen communication of internationalisation and mobility opportunities.

Provide clearer public information regarding research activity, dissertation outputs, conference participation, and broader academic achievements of students and graduates.

Increase transparency regarding quality assurance processes, programme KPIs, and graduate outcomes.

Further strengthen the digital presentation of the programme's academic identity, student experience, and professional impact.

Continue improving accessibility, usability, and overall coherence of the programme's public information environment.

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

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The regular monitoring, review, and revision of postgraduate study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date
b) the changing needs of society
c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies
d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students
e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme
f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The annual internal evaluation of this PSP is conducted in collaboration by the internal evaluation group of the School of Medicine (OMEA) and the quality assurance unit of AUTH (MODIP), and is based largely on regular evaluation of teaching by the PSP students through relevant questionnaires that have been developed by MODIP after the completion of teaching for each course. Data are collected by OMEA forwarded to MODIP, analysed and communicated to the Organising Committee of this PSP, and discussed at the School Assembly in the presence of student representatives. The annual internal evaluation report is prepared by MODIP, and any emerging future corrective actions are decided and presented in this report. OMEA and the PSP Organizing Committee are

responsible for the continuous monitoring and the implementation of corrective actions that have been suggested in the internal annual evaluation report. The latest internal evaluation report with relevant data were made available to EEAP in the submitted document M9.1.

II. Analysis

The PSP follows all the recommended processes annually to review and re-evaluate all aspects of its operation.

The latest internal review conducted by MODIP suggested strengthening/systematizing the study evaluation process (i.e. data analysis and report generation), strengthening student mobility opportunities, updating and completing the English website, strengthening the role of the Academic Advisor, and improving the systematic monitoring of the PSP operations by gathering all relevant documentation and taking all relevant corrective actions, as necessary. These corrective actions must be communicated to all and made publicly available.

The EEAP would also like to see more meaningful involvement of social partners in curriculum shaping and annual evaluations.

III. Conclusions

The PSP follows all recommended processes and actions in relation to continuous internal evaluations. The EEAP agrees with the findings of MODIP in the latest internal evaluation and encourages the PSP to fully implement all recommended corrective actions, as appropriate. Improving the educational process is achieved through the continuous revising of the curriculum and addition of updated teaching material, if appropriate.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Improve and update the PSP website and harmonize the Greek and English websites.

Continue the annual internal evaluations and implement all recommendations, if appropriate. Monitor and document the implementation of corrective actions.

Document and make available to the public all internal evaluation reports and actions, preferably through the PSP website.

Strengthen mobility opportunities for students and staff.

Involve social partners in annual evaluations.

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

In general, PSPs undergo periodic external evaluation by expert evaluation committees appointed by HAHE for the purpose of accreditation. The duration of accreditation is determined by HAHE. This is the first time that the HAHE has evaluated the MSc "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units" through an EEAP consisting of four external experts and one PhD candidate from the University of Patras appointed by HAHE.

The representatives of the PSP provided all necessary documents to the EEAP, including the accreditation report of the Department of Medicine from 2020, which were essential for the accreditation process in accordance with HAHE guidelines.

II. Analysis

The programme representatives and the President of the Department's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) confirmed to the EEAP that all recommendations arising from the present accreditation process will be incorporated into concrete action plans. These plans will be reviewed by MODIP and integrated into the annual quality improvement cycle.

The Department of Medicine is responsible for preparing and submitting an Interim Monitoring Report to HAHE two years after accreditation, outlining progress in implementing the EEAP recommendations.

According to document M10, AUTH underwent institutional external evaluation in

2015 by an external committee appointed by HAHE. The MODIP subsequently submitted documentation for certification of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS).

As described in M10, the programme reports efforts to address recommendations from previous institutional evaluations, particularly regarding strengthening research activity, supporting thesis work, and promoting broader educational development.

However, the EEAP observed that several important issues remain insufficiently developed or insufficiently documented. In particular the research orientation and scholarly identity of the PSP remain somewhat unclear, documentation regarding participation of students in scientific meetings and broader academic activities is limited, and evidence of a sustained postgraduate academic culture promoting critical thinking and scholarly interaction remains relatively underdeveloped.

The EEAP also considers that quality assurance mechanisms, although formally established, do not yet appear fully operationalised in a sufficiently rigorous and data-driven manner. Several structural weaknesses identified during the current evaluation, particularly regarding research orientation, academic engagement, systematic KPI use, and internationalisation, do not appear to have been adequately identified or addressed through previous internal quality processes.

III. Conclusions

This is the first external evaluation of the MSc "Specialization in Nursing of Intensive Care Units". The PSP representatives demonstrated willingness to engage constructively with the accreditation process and expressed commitment to continuous quality improvement. The programme has committed to incorporating the EEAP recommendations into formal action plans to be monitored through the MODIP quality assurance cycle.

Nevertheless, the EEAP considers that the role of MODIP and OMEA should become more proactive and operationally rigorous in monitoring programme development, particularly regarding research orientation, postgraduate academic culture, systematic KPI analysis, internationalisation, stakeholder integration, and alignment with Level 7 postgraduate expectations.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular external evaluation of postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	**X**

Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Establish a formal and documented action plan for implementation and monitoring of the EEAP recommendations.

Strengthen the operational role of MODIP and OMEA in systematic monitoring of programme quality indicators and strategic development.

Improve documentation and monitoring of student participation in scientific meetings, research outputs, thesis outcomes, publications and broader scholarly activities.

Further strengthen the research-oriented and scholarly identity of the programme through development of a more sustained postgraduate academic culture.

Enhance transparency by publishing internal and external evaluation reports, quality assurance actions, and programme improvement outcomes on the PSP website.

Further strengthen internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, and broader stakeholder engagement within future programme development processes.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The programme addresses a major healthcare and workforce need within intensive care nursing and demonstrates strong professional relevance and societal value.

The PSP benefits from a coherent and well-defined target population consisting of practising ICU nurses and healthcare professionals working in demanding clinical environments.

The 90 ECTS structure over three semesters, including a dedicated dissertation semester, provides a more academically credible and coherent postgraduate framework than several other professionally oriented PSPs reviewed by the EEAP.

The programme demonstrates strong integration between theoretical teaching and clinically relevant ICU practice, including communication, ethics, reflective practice, multidisciplinary collaboration, and complex decision-making in critical care environments.

Students and graduates consistently highlighted the accessibility, commitment, and expertise of the teaching staff, as well as the practical value of the programme for their professional and clinical development.

The programme provides stronger continuity of educational engagement, in-person interaction, and faculty-student communication than several other clinically oriented PSPs reviewed during this accreditation process.

The dissertation portfolio demonstrates stronger evidence-based and analytically oriented themes than several other professionally focused PSPs, including clinical audits, protocol development, infection management, and applied healthcare research topics.

The programme benefits from access to substantial ICU clinical infrastructure, experienced multidisciplinary teaching staff, and broader institutional support systems within AUTH and affiliated hospitals.

The programme has established formal quality assurance structures aligned with institutional and national requirements and demonstrates willingness to engage constructively with continuous quality improvement processes.

II. Areas of Weakness

The postgraduate academic and research-intensive identity of the programme remains less clearly articulated than its professional and clinical training role.

The current title of the programme creates conceptual ambiguity and risks conflating postgraduate MSc education with the newly established formal ICU nursing specialisation pathway in Greece.

The programme does not yet systematically monitor dissertation typology, methodological quality, publication outputs, conference participation, doctoral progression, or broader scholarly outcomes through mature KPI-driven processes.

Although several dissertations demonstrate evidence-based analytical characteristics, variability in methodological depth remains and narrative reviews continue to

constitute part of the dissertation portfolio.

The research support and methodological training structures remain less mature and systematically organised than the clinically oriented educational components.

Assessment methods appear heavily weighted toward MCQ-based examinations, with more limited use of broader analytical, reflective, case-based, and evidence-based assessment approaches.

The exact structure, supervision model, competency framework, and assessment of practical clinical activities are not always fully standardised or clearly documented.

Internationalisation, mobility participation, and structured integration with broader European academic and professional networks remain relatively limited.

Public communication and website content remain more operational and administrative than strategically focused on communicating the programme's Level 7 academic identity, research activities, and graduate outcomes.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Further strengthen and more clearly articulate the postgraduate academic and research-oriented identity of the programme alongside its strong professional and clinical orientation.

Establish clearer minimum methodological standards for diploma theses and progressively prioritise original clinical research, evidence-based analytical projects, quality-improvement studies, and systematic reviews over narrative reviews.

Systematically collect, categorise, and analyse dissertation outputs, publications, conference participation, doctoral progression, and broader graduate trajectories through KPI-driven quality assurance mechanisms.

Continue strengthening sustained scholarly engagement throughout the programme through structured tutorials, journal clubs, reflective learning activities, simulations, evidence-based discussions, and continuous faculty-student interaction.

Further strengthen research mentoring, methodological support, scientific writing guidance, and structured evidence-based learning across all programme components.

Develop more diverse and analytically oriented assessment methods beyond

predominantly MCQ-based examinations, including case-based assessment, reflective assignments, and applied evidence-based exercises.

Further clarify and standardise the supervision, learning objectives, competency framework, and assessment of practical clinical training activities across all ICU environments.

Strengthen the operational use of QA data and student feedback in strategic programme development, curriculum refinement, and monitoring of postgraduate learning outcomes.

Further strengthen the distinction between postgraduate MSc education and formal professional ICU nursing specialisation pathways, including consideration of future programme naming and positioning.

Expand internationalisation efforts, mobility opportunities, conference participation, alumni engagement, and broader integration with European and international intensive care nursing networks.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

None

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

2, 4, 6, 9, 10

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

1, 3, 5, 7, 8

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

None

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

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