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Accreditation Report
for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Communications Networks and Systems Security

Department: Informatics

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 04/02/2026

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 **Communications Networks and Systems Security** 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 Communications Networks and Systems Security of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Law 4653/2020:

1. Skevoulis Sotirios (Chair)
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems, Pace University
   (Institution of origin)

2. ANDRITSOS FIVOS
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Commission of the European Communities, Joint Research Center
   (Institution of origin)

3. Boulogiorgou Despoina
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   University of West Attica
   (Institution of origin)

4. KARAYIANNIS TASSOS
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Brunel University
   (Institution of origin)

5. TRYFONAS THEODOROS (THEO)
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   University of Bristol
   (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 & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) was constituted in early December 2025 and received the accreditation support materials for four Postgraduate Study Programmes: (a) Communications Networks and System Security, (b) Data Science and World Wide Web, (c) Digital Media – Computational Intelligence, and (d) Technologies of Interactive Systems, approximately one week prior to the scheduled accreditation visit. The review was organized by HAHE and the Department of Informatics at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The support materials provided were exemplary, with all documentation meticulously prepared and presented.

Throughout the visit, all participants—including MODIP, teaching staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders—were prompt and forthcoming in supplying the requisite information. The introductory meeting, attended by the department leadership, MODIP representatives, and the directors of the four Programmes, was convened on December 15th, 2025, and conducted online via Zoom. The discussions proceeded in a spirit of cooperation and collegiality.

On Monday, December 15th, the EEAP members convened briefly to organize the accreditation review and allocate responsibilities. Immediately following this session, meetings commenced with the directors of the four Programmes, the Head of the Department, MODIP members, Steering Committees/OMEA members, and MODIP staff to discuss the design and compliance of the new Programmes with the established Quality Standards for Accreditation.

Subsequently, the next meeting involved administrative staff and teaching staff members from all Programmes to review the facilities and learning resources, ensuring that the materials, equipment, and infrastructure were adequate for the effective delivery of the four Programmes. The EEAP privately viewed a video presentation of the university facilities, graciously provided by the department.

On Tuesday, December 16th, the agenda focused on the Postgraduate Study Programme in Communications Networks and Systems Security. The day commenced with a meeting with faculty members to discuss their workload, opportunities for professional development, student evaluation methods, and their teaching and research activities. This was followed by an engagement with current students of the Programme, during which the EEAP solicited feedback regarding their experiences, invited suggestions for improvement, and encouraged candid assessments of their academic journey.

In the afternoon, the EEAP met with graduates of the Programme, facilitating an informative

exchange. This was succeeded by a meeting with social partners and employers, who described various forms of collaboration with the department. Following these discussions, the EEAP members convened privately via Zoom to deliberate on their initial impressions and prepare a brief oral presentation of their findings. The final meeting of the day was held with representatives of MODIP, the Head of the Department, and the Programme Director, during which additional comments and clarifications were addressed. The EEAP delivered a preliminary verbal report outlining their impressions and key findings.

The Panel wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for the exemplary organization and hospitality extended during these meetings, and for the exceptional openness and collaboration demonstrated throughout the virtual accreditation visit.

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 Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) was established in 2018 (ΦΕΚ Ν3339/τ.Β/10-8-2018) and it was launched in 2018-2019 academic year. Since that time it has undergo one major revision in May of 2023.

The PSP admits graduates from Departments of Schools of Sciences, Polytechnic Schools, and other university departments with related fields of study. Candidates lacking the necessary foundational knowledge may still apply, provided they acquire the required competencies within a period not exceeding the first two (2) semesters of enrollment.

The scientific domain of Communication Networks and Systems Security is experiencing a significant increase in demand for highly specialized professionals in areas such as communication networks and cybersecurity. There is a clear need for advanced expertise beyond the scope of undergraduate education, with emphasis on cutting-edge technologies. Furthermore, there is growing demand for executives in critical infrastructure sectors—including telecommunications, energy, public administration, and healthcare—where network integrity and security are of paramount importance. The PSP addresses this need by offering continuous professional development for ICT specialists who are already employed and require upskilling.

Interest in this field has been longstanding, as evidenced by the previous specialization in Networks within the Department of Informatics' earlier MSc program. The primary objective of the current MSc is to advance knowledge, foster research, and train highly qualified scientists in emerging topics related to Communication Networks and Systems Security. Additionally, the program seeks to enhance research activity in these areas and produce graduates capable of successfully occupying positions in both the private and public sectors, as well as in research and academic institutions.

The PSP comprises 90 ECTS credits (with 1 ECTS corresponding to 25–30 hours of study) and offers two distinct specializations:

1. Communication Networks
2. Systems Security

Each academic year, the program admits a maximum of 20 students per specialization. The minimum duration of study is 1.5 years, with a maximum of 2 years. For full-time working students (upon submission of proof of employment), the duration may be extended to 3 years under a part-time study arrangement.

The PSP is affiliated with one of Greece's most prominent and well-established IT departments, featuring highly qualified and experienced faculty members with extensive

publications and strong industry collaborations. Graduates of the program are rapidly absorbed into the labor market, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, telecommunications, cyber defense, Security Operations Centers (SOC), Network Operations Centers (NOC), and consulting.

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 School of Informatics has developed and enacted formally a Quality Assurance Policy for its Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) Communications Networks and System Security that is aligned with the institutional quality policy of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The policy was approved by the Departmental Assembly (Σ.Τ. 443/20-12-2023) and is publicly available on the programme's website.

The policy declares a clear commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement across teaching, research, administration and student support, as well as explicitly referencing the implementation of the institutional Internal Quality Assurance System in cooperation with the University Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). It addresses all core dimensions required by the Standard, including programme structure and organisation, learning outcomes aligned with the European and National Qualifications Frameworks (Level 7), teaching effectiveness, staff qualifications, demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, quality of support services, and efficient use of resources derived from tuition fees.

The PSP has defined specific, measurable and time-bound quality objectives which are listed in M1.1 and documented in detail in the Quality Targeting document (M1.2). Objectives are grouped under strategic goals related to educational quality, research excellence, and internationalisation, and are supported by clearly defined indicators (KPIs), baseline values, target values, concrete actions, assigned responsibilities and relevant implementation timelines.

II. Analysis

The Quality Assurance Policy demonstrates coherence and is compliant with the requirements of Principle 1. It represents a structured approach to quality management at programme level. The explicit linkage to the institutional level QA system and the description of implemented procedures indicate that the policy is enacted through established mechanisms, as evidenced both through the documentation provided and by the discussion during the evaluation meetings.

A particular strength is the thoughtful detail of the quality targeting framework. Document M1.2 presents well-defined quality objectives ranging from: student performance and progression, student engagement in course evaluation, completion rates; research output and impact of academic staff; to student mobility. Objectives are associated with measurable indicators, defined responsible roles (e.g. Programme Director, academic advisors, teaching staff, Secretariat) and implementation timelines which support effective monitoring and accountability.

The learning outcomes of the programme are explicitly stated to be aligned with Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Frameworks. The quality objectives directly support their achievement through improvements in teaching effectiveness, assessment and student progression. Staff are mindful of ensuring a

state of art student experience through access to the latest technologies and testbeds, especially the newly acquired Cyber Range platform. Communication and dissemination of the quality policy are addressed through publication on the programme website and internal communication within the academic unit.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates the desire to establish a mature quality culture with systematic goal setting, monitoring and feedback mechanisms embedded in the operation of the PSP.

III. Conclusions

The Postgraduate Study Programme Communications Networks and System Security meets fully the requirements of Principle 1. A publicly available and institutionally aligned quality assurance policy is in place, supported by a detailed and measurable quality targeting framework. Quality objectives are clearly defined, monitored through appropriate KPIs and integrated into the continuous improvement processes of 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	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R1.1. The panel encourages the Department to continue strengthening the explicit reporting of progress against quality targets in annual internal evaluation reports, highlighting achieved improvements and any corrective actions taken where targets are not fully met.
R1.2. Consider enhancing the involvement of external stakeholders (e.g. industry representatives or alumni) in the periodic review of quality objectives, particularly those related to labour market relevance and graduate employability.
R1.3. Consider tracking/highlighting special student achievements such as co-authoring research papers with teaching staff, or winning student innovation competitions etc. under the ‘quality of education’ or ‘excellence’ targets (as an additional criterion, with ‘soft’ targets).
R1.4. Ensuring sufficient support for the management and maintenance of the environments that support practical teaching and lab experience will be essential in the provision of an engagement and hands on student experience.

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 documentation relevant to Principle 2, as provided in the HAHE site, is complete and well written. The Study Guide (Document M2.3) provides an overview of the host department, its strategy as well as an outline of the reasons and the market needs for such a PSP. It also provides a comprehensive outline of the expected learning outcomes for each one of the two PSP streams. As reflected in its title, the two PSP streams are:

1. Communication networks and
2. Systems' security

The PSP regulations as well as the PSP Study Program, complete with teaching staff, links to detailed content and other useful information (such as mobility, doctoral studies, other PSPs hosted in the Department etc.) are also part of the comprehensive Study Guide.

The PSP courses are outlined, according to the HAHE guidelines, in Document M2.4. Finally, Document M2.5 provides a tabular overview of the PSP teaching staff assignments.

II. Analysis

The PSP has been set up in alignment with the relevant policies of AUTH and in compliance with the national legislation. The PSP, in contrast to many other Greek PSPs in the IT domain that are generic, is well-focused and offers specialized knowledge. The planned courses are delivered by academic staff with expertise in their respective fields, integrating both research-based content and elements targeted toward industrial and societal needs.

The PSP is well-structured and corresponds to Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), ensuring that students acquire advanced academic and professional knowledge, skills, and competences. The expected student workload also appears consistent with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) requirements for a Level 7 program. While the PSP program covers adequately the technical aspects of its subject matter it offers no course relevant to non-technical aspects, such as legal, regulatory or social aspects of IT, which are increasingly important in most modern IT applications.

The University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), responsible for supervising

internal and external evaluation procedures, has provided effective guidance during the preparation and documentation of the new PSP. Their support has contributed to the creation of a clear and well-organized set of high-quality practical documents available in both Greek and English.

The PSP requires a total of 90 ECTS for its completion: 7.5 ECTS for each of the 4 courses of the first semester and 4 the second semester, including trunk and electives, plus 30 ECTS for the Master's Thesis during the third and final semester. The maximum duration of studies is 4 semesters but there is a possibility of part-time enrollment, in which case the PSP duration is extended to a maximum of 6 semesters.

The PSP is delivered in Greek and/or English language. However, it is not clear when is English used, given that a certificate of knowledge of Greek language is required from non-Greek candidate students.

The PSP fees are € 1,800, paid in 3 installments of €600 each. In addition, the PSP has additional income from Google, with which it has a long-standing collaboration.

The PSP's policy for a partial (up to 35%) remote delivery of its courses is a good compromise between the need for hands-on experience and person-to-person interaction versus the flexibility of remote teaching.

Although the Study Guide provides comprehensive information on ERASMUS+, it is not clear if the PSP students can benefit from such mobility.

The PSP study program seems well-aligned with industry and societal needs. Among its teaching staff, two are external, one of them employee in the Center of Electronic Governance. There exists a portal dedicated to Department's graduates and another portal dedicated to the post-graduate program alumni. Although the Department organizes annually a virtual meeting with alumni and stakeholders, there seems to be no formal external advisory board.

The PSP organizes regularly, as part of the teaching process, visits and meetings with Industry.

III. Conclusions

The Department has developed a well-focused and well-structured program in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the AUTH and HAHE. The PSP seems to fit well in the host Department's strategy. Its study program and the expected learning outcomes are in line with the relevant industrial and societal needs. The documentation provided is concise and well-written.

The PSP is fully compliant with the HAHE requirements concerning Principle 2.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R2.1. The PSP should further enhance, through visits, seminars and industrial diploma thesis, the collaboration with other Institutions and Industry.

R2.2. The Department should formalise the annual virtual meetings with alumni and stakeholders, institutionalizing an external advisory board.

R2.3. The PSP should introduce a course (or, in alterantive, lectures and/or seminars) on non-technical IT aspects such as legal, regulatory or societal requirtements.

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

A set of good practices is implemented for the PSP, including continuous contact with students beyond the study guide requirements, adaptation of teaching and study programs to current developments and industry needs, and ongoing monitoring of student progress. As part of the effort to enhance the student-centered educational process, a process for managing and tracking student complaints at the University has been designed. For the academic evaluation of the PSP courses, questionnaires ask students to respond to questions about the course content and usefulness, and the quality of teaching. Still, the EEAP didn't find questions about infrastructures and students' effort.

Students are well-informed and familiar with the assessment procedures, and they attest to receiving ample support from their professors. Mutual respect between students and instructors has been observed, fostering a collaborative atmosphere and a sense of appreciation in their relationships. Although students are not informed of the questionnaire results, actions are taken to address their problems.

II. Analysis

PSP clearly serves the societal need for lifelong learning and the demand for professional development among individuals in both private and public sectors. The teaching methods are adequate for meeting the needs of adult students at the University, who are typically employed and self-sustaining. From the assessment of the Programme, the student-centered approach was evident, along with the academic staff's ability to meet this task and the successful implementation of existing procedures. There is, however, room for improvement in the methods, processes, and tools used for the student-centered approach.

III. Conclusions

The rules and regulations developed for this Programme’s student-centered learning, teaching, assessment, and degree award are considered adequate. There is room for improvement in the methods, processes, and tools used for the student-centered approach. Based on the provided documentation and discussions, the EEAP can state that the PSP is well-received by students and stakeholders.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R3.1 Officially introduce student representation in the quality assurance processes.
R3.2 Evaluate each course and report the data independently announced to students instead of an oral introduction by the academic staff per semester/year.
R3.3 Increase the alumni and social partners' participation in the course/programme evaluation and development
R3.4 An update on adult education methods, for professors, could be helpful.
R3.5 Enrichment of the PSP with interdisciplinarity.

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 evaluation and selection of candidates for enrolment is carried out in accordance with the PSP study guide. The admission procedures for the study programmes are clear and accessible to students. There are processes and ample guidelines for completing assignments and theses. Students are encouraged to participate in auxiliary work for the University or in the department's research programmes related to their thesis.

Students can access the relevant regulations and instructions regarding their rights and obligations. The terms and conditions for student mobility (European and international) within the Erasmus+ programme are detailed.

II. Analysis

There are sufficient documents that accurately describe the required procedures for participation in the PSP, the rights and obligations of the students, the assessment requirements, and the completion of their thesis work.

The EEAP recognises the effective organisation of the PSP and acknowledges the quality of the regulations that promote the academic culture and the value of knowledge.

III. Conclusions

The rules and regulations developed for this PSP guiding admission, progression, recognition, and the degree awarded to students are considered adequate.

Panel Judgement

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

Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

NONE

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP documentation relevant to Principle 5, as provided in the HAHE site, is well written. Document M5.1 provides a tabular overview of the PSP teaching staff bibliographical performance. Document M5.2 provides a comprehensive overview of the academic staff selection criteria and procedures while document M5.3 outlines their contractual conditions and obligations. Finally, document M5.4 describes the Department's academic staff support and professional development policies.

II. Analysis

AUTH has a well-established and well-documented procedure for the appointment and promotion of the academic staff, in accordance to the national

rules and regulations.

The Department of Informatics is organised in three Sectors, including four laboratories. On top of the graduate programme, it provides, as per 2018-19 data, five PSPs plus one intra-departmental PSP plus doctoral studies. The Department's has 13 Professors, 11 Associated and 6 Assistant Professors for a total of 30 (or 31 according to the Department's presantaion) academic staff members, as per the Study Guide (document M2.3), which is a rather small number for such teaching commitments.

There is a discrepancy among documents M2.5 and M5.1 as to the PSP teaching staff, the first quoting a total of 9 while the second quoting 10 teaching staff members. In terms of numbers, the teaching support offered by the PSP is adequate: a total of 9 (or 10 according M5.1), 8 academics (7 active and 1 honorary) plus one external professional from the Digital Governance Centre. They are responsible for the delivery of 12 courses plus the thesis supervision.

Documentation provided is limited to bibliometrics and publication statistics and, therefore, no conclusions can be derived as to the suitability of the teaching staff in relation to their particular assignments. It is only through additional web searches that one can check that the expertise and experience of the academic staff is indeed adequate and relevant to their assignments.

There are as many as 14 criteria, among them a generic reference to the teaching performance, but no specific teaching performance evaluation parameters are mentioned. The PSP is, seemingly, well supported by administrative and support staff, although this is not sufficiently documented in the documents supplied through HAHE.

In order to better evaluate the adequacy of the Department's academic staff to cover their teaching obligations, especially in presence of a rather large number of PSPs, possibly with common or overlapping courses and activities, a table mapping the academic staff assignments (along some keywords on their expertise) across all the Department's activities, including graduate, post-graduate and doctoral programs would have been desirable.

The PSP staff appeared very enthusiastic and committed to their work. During the on-line meeting, they highlighted the extroversity of the PSP and the good relations with Industry.

With the exception of one inter-departmental PSP, there is no other evidence of interaction with other departments in the university or other universities of Greece or overseas.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is fully compliant with the HAHE requirements concerning Principle 5.

The academic staff of the PSP under accreditation have the knowledge and the expertise to deliver the assigned courses.

On top of the provided statistics on the academic staff work-load, the Department should provide a table mapping all the academic staff assignments, along with their qualifications and some keywords on their expertise, across all the Department's activities, including graduate, post-graduate and doctoral programs.

The Department should seek to increase its academic staff or abolish some of its postgraduate programme offerings. Furthermore, it should reach out for further collaborations with other Geek and overseas institutions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R5.1. Put better in evidence the credentials and experience of academic staff relative to their teaching assignments, possibly through a table, mapping their assignments, their qualifications and their expertise across all the Department's activities.

R5.2. Enhance collaborations with other University departments and Institutions in Greece and overseas.

R5.3. Establish, at Departmental or University level, an annual cycle of teaching peer review, including classroom observation, as a mean to support staff development and evaluation.

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 department boasts extensive infrastructure, including state-of-the-art laboratories. There are also well-resourced libraries, study spaces, and access to academic databases. The teaching staff of the PSP consists of 9 faculty members. Career services include career days and internship opportunities, as well as an alumni network and Erasmus+ mobility programmes. As shown in the Program's five-year budget, part of the Program's income will finance scholarships for students. Part of the tuition fees is invested in the PSP for the development of infrastructure (computers, software, books, secretarial and technical support, etc.), as well as in teacher and student training through financing participation in

international conferences. Finally, part of the tuition fees is invested in promoting the PSP and attracting new students to the program.

II. Analysis

The programme's infrastructure and resources are satisfactory, reflecting significant investment in state-of-the-art technology essential for high-calibre research and education. While resources are deemed adequate, there is limited detail on mechanisms for regularly updating equipment and software to keep pace with rapid technological advancements. It is noted that the transparency and regular assessments of infrastructure and technological updates could ensure the programme remains at the forefront of science education. Exploring alternative funding models, such as research grants or partnerships, could provide additional financial stability and growth opportunities.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the programme's learning resources and student support were deemed appropriate and effective in meeting students' needs. However, it was identified that the programme should allocate more time and effort toward developing a more comprehensive and active alumni and social partners' network. This enhanced network would facilitate better information exchange, mentorship opportunities, and career guidance. By fostering stronger connections between alumni, industry and current students, the programme could create a collaborative community that supports professional growth, industry engagement, and lifelong learning. Initiatives such as alumni events, networking platforms, and structured mentoring programmes could significantly enhance the programme's impact and reputation.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R6.1 Provide more opportunities to students for "hands-on" experiences with real projects and procedures as part of their coursework. A few more elaborate courses could provide that option.

R6.2 Prioritise the development of a more comprehensive and active alumni network. This initiative should focus on fostering mentorship opportunities, enhancing information

exchange, and strengthening connections between alumni and current students, thereby supporting students' overall growth. Structured events, networking platforms, and mentoring programmes can significantly support professional development and enhance the programme’s overall impact.

R6.3 Greater emphasis should be placed on the program's extroversion to attract new students. The creation of an institutionalized way to communicate with social partners and alumni, and the processing and presentation of the results of collaborations (publications, research programs, innovative products, etc.) are necessary processes that must be initiated.

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 School of Informatics of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has a very well-established information system for collecting and monitoring data. The information collected relates to students (numbers entering programme and progression) academic staff performance (teaching load, student staff ratios and research in terms of grants awarded, publications and citation index) and provisions to staff and students. The discussion with the Head of School, programme coordinator and academic and administration staff confirmed that they are all fully aware of the data collection processes and their significance in monitoring quality practice across the School
and the specific PSP.

The questionnaire given to the students includes 12 questions that cover the content, organisation and level of the module and continues with an evaluation of the actual delivery by the academic staff. The questionnaire allows students to evaluate the specific module, with a rating 1-5 and the possibility to give additional comments, which in their view will improve the teaching experience. The data is centrally collected and provided to the Quality Assurance Unit of the University (MODIP) for a statistical analysis. At the end of the year this analysis is given to the members of the School, quality assurance team (OMEA), the Head of School and the programme coordinator. Discussions are then expected at the Programme Steering Committee and School level for improvements/changes as necessary.

The processes outlined above are appropriate and thorough and provide the School and the teaching team with the tools and a methodology for continuous improvements using known standards of excellence in tertiary education and key performance indicators (e.g. student progression rates, average module marks and staff performance in for example publications and h-index measures.)

As mentioned above, it was clear that staff (teaching and administrative staff) are familiar with the requirements and the methodology of data collection and monitoring and encourage student to participate in the process. The staff are, through their own initiative, able to "close the loop", i.e. initiate corrective actions that relate to the content and delivery of the modules.

It was not clear from the paperwork provided if the School or programme coordinator and the steering committee collect data on graduates (destination, employability and type of employment and salary ranges). This is an important key performance indicator. However, it became clear later, with the presentation of the slides on the PSP, that these data are indeed collected. This is an excellent practice that should be properly documented and used – in statistical terms – in the PSP website to encourage more and better applicants.

II. Analysis

It was evident from the paperwork provided that the School and the programme coordinator/committee have an established process of collecting data and with the help of MODIP analyse them and use them in a continuous process of improvement.

The student return rates to the questionnaire on some modules is low and hence the statistical analysis of the results are not particularly useful, i.e. do not allow staff to extract and conclude on indicative corrective actions. It is worth mentioning that this occurs in other universities – both in Greece and overseas. The School is aware of this and are making efforts to increase the student participation rates.

The general main criticism here that applies to all the feedback given by students through the questionnaires and other means (e.g. verbal/in writing) is the fact that the students do not participate in any formal discussion that follow and relate to the comments provided. There is no formal process where student representatives participate in the Programme Steering Committee or School meetings where their comments are discussed and feedback/list of actions are provided.

Data on student graduates, although collected and give a very positive picture of the PSP and the School, are not appropriately used by the School. This information is very important for prospective students, parents and carers, career advisors and future employers throughout the country. Statistical data (not personal) on the student progression in industry should be made available as a key performance indicator of the School and the particular PSP.

III. Conclusions

The PSP in Communication Networks and Systems Security benefits from a well-established information management system that is both comprehensive and well supported by the School/staff and the university central services and committees (MODIP). Key performance indicators are identified and performance analysed to ensure a continuous quality improvement process. In order to help enhance this process, the School needs to consider a formal process of engaging students – through their representatives - in the discussion of matters arising based on student feedback, via for example the questionnaires and other verbal/written communications and inform students in a documented format of improvements and changes. The School has a very supportive stakeholders group, ready to work more closely with the academic staff both in an informal but also a formal way, e.g. meeting twice a year. In addition, information and data available from stakeholders (e.g. availability of relevant vacancies, type of vacancies, locations) could be utilised to the benefit of the students. The same applies to data collection and input from graduates of the programme.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R7.1. Establish a data base on PSP graduates and actively engage this cohort in an informal and a formal way to enhance both the programme curriculum with industry relevant material and the overall student experience.
R7.2. Include student representatives in a formal way in discussing both specific module/staff and overall programme performance.
R7.3. Continue to encourage students to participate in larger numbers to the module/programme evaluation. Include questions on the overall programme to the questionnaire given to graduating students.
R7.4. Engage more formally with stakeholders and utilise feedback on course improvements/changes and data on employability.

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN A DIRECT AND READILY ACCESSIBLE WAY. THE RELEVANT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, OBJECTIVE AND CLEAR.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public.

Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the PSP they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures applied, the pass rates, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided on the employment perspectives of PSP graduates.

Documentation

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the PSP*
- *Bilingual version of the PSP website with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Informatics and the PSP in Communications Networks and System Security have adequate information on the available university and departmental websites. The information available includes programme activities, learning outcomes, teaching delivery, assessment processes and pass rates. Student numbers entering and per year of the programme as they progress are also available. This is very useful to students seeking a postgraduate course and at the same time it constitutes important data for parents and alumni. It is also of significant value to industrial and other private and government organisations as they seek to assess graduates applying for jobs or if they are interested in collaborating with the Department and the specific PSP. Information on module content as well as information on staff interest and expertise is also very important. The website is both in Greek and English. In addition, the programme steering committee uses other appropriate channels for promoting the PSP, like workshops and invited lectures by alumni and industrial experts.

II. Analysis

The website of the programme is well designed. However, an initial assessment by the Panel members indicated the existence of two different websites, depending on how one seeks to find the information, i.e. via the main university website of directly by searching for the Department. This was discussed with the programme coordinator and academic staff. They mentioned that the university information management group and departmental staff were currently working on the university/department and programme websites and this anomaly was in the process of being rectified. It was also observed that the English version did not include all the information relevant to the programme and available on the Greek version. Again, academic staff with expertise in IT informed the panel that they

were in the processes of improving both the Greek and the English versions of the website. Feedback from the alumni (e.g. success stories) and stakeholders (e.g. possible collaborations) were not included in the website.

III. Conclusions

There are currently improvements that need to be made on the website of the department and the programme in collaboration with the university central information management group. However, it was reassuring to note that relevant staff were aware of the issues, and they were in the processes of rectifying them. Similarly, inconsistencies and omissions in the English version were to be corrected. The website could be enriched with information on graduate student destinations/employability rates and relationship with stakeholders.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

NONE

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 PSP Communications Networks and System Security is subject to a formally established and implemented internal evaluation process. Internal evaluations are conducted annually in accordance with the Institutional Internal Quality Assurance system, as evidenced by the MODIP Internal Evaluation Report.

The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded systematically and submitted to the University Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). The evaluation process covers all core dimensions of programme operation, including programme design and learning outcomes, teaching and assessment, student-centred learning, research-teaching nexus, learning resources, student support services, information

management and public information.

Findings of the internal evaluation are communicated within the academic unit and include a structured identification of strengths, weaknesses and proposed preventive or corrective actions. The report identifies good practice (e.g. teaching and research nexus, operation of the academic advisor system, engagement with stakeholders and alumni) as well as areas requiring further attention, such as infrastructure constraints, support staffing, student participation in evaluations and outgoing student mobility.

II. Analysis

The evidence demonstrates that the PSP has an effective and systematic mechanism for on-going monitoring and periodic internal evaluation, fully consistent with the expectations of Principle 9. The annual self-assessment is comprehensive in scope and methodologically sound, drawing upon institutional data sources, student evaluations, programme documentation and, in principle, structured feedback from multiple stakeholders to a varying degree of detail.

A particular strength of the process is the depth of the MODIP report, which goes beyond the prescriptive checklist and provides a reflective assessment of programme performance, including benchmarking indicators and qualitative analysis. Explicit identification of both strengths and weaknesses indicates a mature quality culture and a pragmatic and honest appraisal of the programme's operation. This feedback constitutes useful operational input for the PSP.

Action plans and improvement directions are clearly articulated in the internal evaluation, with emphasis on strengthening feedback mechanisms, increasing student participation in evaluations, enhancing international mobility and improving infrastructure and support staffing.

Whilst the report outlines proposed corrective and preventive actions, the evidence of systematic tracking and reporting of the implementation and impact of these actions over time could be further strengthened.

III. Conclusions

The PSP meets the requirements of Principle 9 to a substantial degree. Regular internal monitoring and annual internal evaluation are firmly embedded in the programme's quality assurance processes. Evaluation outcomes are documented, communicated within the academic unit, and used to inform improvement planning, providing a solid foundation for continuous enhancement.

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

R9.1. The panel recommends strengthening the formal follow-up of action plans arising from internal evaluations, including clearer documentation of implementation status, timelines, and measurable impact on programme quality.
R9.2. Particular attention should be given to increasing student participation in course and teaching evaluations and to enhancing outgoing student mobility, in line with the programme's stated quality objectives.
R9.3. The academic unit is encouraged to continue efforts to address infrastructure and support staffing constraints, ensuring the long-term sustainability and regular upgrading of the learning environment.

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

Based on the online discussions, it is evident that all faculty and staff members have recognized the significance of the Quality Assurance (QA) process and its role in the continuous improvement of the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP). All internal stakeholders—including academic, administrative, and support staff, as well as students—are actively participating in the current review process with the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP). However, the Panel did not find evidence of involvement from external stakeholders (such as social partners or other collaborators) in the PSP's QA processes or its ongoing development. The PSP has recently addressed recommendations pertaining to postgraduate programs as outlined in the Institution's external evaluation report (2015). Furthermore, the PSP has established a concrete plan to review the EEAP's comments and to implement corrective actions as necessary.

II. Analysis

The EEAP considers the PSP's plan of action to be comprehensive and well-conceived. As this is the first time the PSP is undergoing the accreditation process (the previous external evaluation occurred in 2011), the outcomes of the current plan will be assessed in future accreditation reviews. Faculty and staff have demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of external review and have provided relevant information to the Panel in a timely and efficient manner. The PSP has considered the feedback from the 2011 external evaluation and has implemented an action plan to address the recommendations that fall within its remit. There is sufficient evidence of specific actions and measurements

undertaken in response to recommendations from the earlier Institutional Evaluation (2015).

III. Conclusions

The leadership of the Programme is encouraged to further highlight and promote the strengths of the PSP. Although there has been no prior external accreditation for the PSP, its commitment to the principles and processes of Quality Assurance is apparent across all aspects of the Programme. It is recommended that the PSP establish formal and well-defined procedures for soliciting, utilizing, and evaluating feedback from both students and external stakeholders (including graduates and partners). Additionally, it is strongly advised that the PSP maintain minutes of relevant meetings and committee sessions for QA purposes. This practice will enhance the documentation of QA activities, support ongoing Programme improvement, and provide evidence for monitoring and evaluation.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R10.1 The PSP leadership is encouraged to further promote the strengths of PSP.

R10.2 the PSP establish formal and well-defined procedures for soliciting, utilizing, and evaluating feedback from both students and external stakeholders (including graduates and partners).

R10.3 The PSP should maintain minutes of relevant meetings and committee sessions for QA purposes

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The PSP is focused and well structured!

Both of its streams cover quite well the technical aspects of their respective subject matter.

Course delivery through physical presence during the afternoon hours, permitting the attendance to students who work.

Possibility of remote/on-line delivery of up to 35% of the courses

Continuous contact with students beyond the study guide requirements

PSP clearly serves the societal need for lifelong learning and the demand for professional development among individuals in both the private and public sectors

Well-resourced libraries, study spaces, and access to academic databases; opportunities for state of art hands-on learning through the Cyber Range available

Gender balance appears reasonable given the STEM nature of the subject

The PSP benefits from a well-established information management system that is both comprehensive and well supported by the Department/staff and the university central services and committees.

Key performance indicators are identified and performance analysed to ensure a continuous quality improvement process.

The Department has a very supportive alumni and stakeholders group, ready to work more closely with the academic staff both in an informal but also a formal way

II. Areas of Weakness

Non-technical IT aspects such as legal, regulatory or societal requirements are not covered.

External stakeholders are not involved in a formal way

The results of the evaluation reports and relevant data are not announced to students. The Department does not have a formal process of engaging students – through their representatives - in the discussion of matters arising based on student feedback.

There are no alternative funding models, such as research scholarships or partnerships, that could provide additional financial stability and growth opportunities.

Information and data available from stakeholders is not utilised to the benefit of the students. The same applies to data collection and input from graduates of the programme.

Improvements need to be made on the website of the department and the programme in collaboration with the university central information management group.
The website could be enriched with information on graduate student destinations/employability rates and relationship with stakeholders.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Explore the possibility of introducing more courses (i.e. 5 instead of 4 courses per semester), including a course on non-technical IT aspects such as legal, regulatory or societal requirtements.

In alternative, introduce lectures and/or seminars focused on legal, regulatory and other non-technical IT aspects.

Promote group work by introducing group assignments.

The PSP should further enhance, through visits, seminars and industrial diploma thesis, the collaboration with other Institutions and Industry.

The Department should formalize the annual virtual meetings with alumni and stakeholders, institutionalizing an external advisory board. Prioritise the development
of a more comprehensive and active alumni network. This initiative should focus on fostering mentorship opportunities, enhancing information exchange,
and strengthening connections between alumni and current students, thereby

supporting students' overall growth

Officially introduce student representation in the quality assurance processes.

Evaluate each course and report the data independently announced to students instead of an oral introduction by the academic staff per semester/year.

Increase the alumni and social partners' participation in the course/programme evaluation and development

An update on adult education methods, for professors, could be helpful.

Enrichment of the PSP with interdisciplinarity.

Establish, at Departmental or University level, an annual cycle of teaching peer review, including classroom observation, as a mean to support staff development and evaluation.

Provide more opportunities to students for “hands-on” experiences with real projects and procedures as part of their coursework. A few more elaborate courses could provide that option.

Continue to encourage students to participate in larger numbers to the module/programme evaluation. Include questions on the overall programme to the questionnaire given to graduating students.

The PSP establish formal and well-defined procedures for soliciting, utilizing, and evaluating feedback from both students and external stakeholders (including graduates and partners).

The PSP should maintain minutes of relevant meetings and committee sessions for QA purposes

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

Principles: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Principles: 3, 7, 9

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

NONE

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

NONE

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
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