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# Accreditation Report
# for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Management of soil, water, energy resources and rural environment

Department: Agriculture

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 16/02/2026

Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης
ΕΣΠΑ 2021-2027
Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και Κοινωνική Συνοχή
enqa.

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Management of soil, water, energy resources and rural environment** 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 Management of soil, water, energy resources and rural environment of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Law 4653/2020:

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

2. ALVANIDES (ΑΛΒΑΝΙΔΗΣ) SERAPHIM (ΣΕΡΑΦΕΙΜ)
   *(Title, Name, Surname)*
   TU Dortmund University, Germany
   *(Institution of origin)*

3. KATOPODES NIKOLAOS
   *(Title, Name, Surname)*
   University of Michigan
   *(Institution of origin)*

4. LIOLIOU APHRODITE
   *(Title, Name, Surname)*
   International Hellenic University
   *(Institution of origin)*

5. TSIAMI AMALIA
   *(Title, Name, Surname)*
   University of West London, UK
   *(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.*

In preparation for the review and assessment of the PSP Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and Rural Environment, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) reviewed a multitude of documentary material provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices.
The programme review was conducted via Zoom teleconferences, organized and coordinated by HAHE and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). The schedule and agenda of the evaluation were as stated below (all times refer to Athens time).
Monday, 26 January 2026

15:00-16:00 hrs, Preliminary private meeting of the EEAP. Discussion of the programme under review; assignment of writing parts of the draft accreditation report among the members of the EEAP.

16:00-17:30 hrs. Welcome meeting and overviews of the three postgraduate study programmes; PSP1: Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and Rural Environment, PSP2: Food Science and Nutrition, and PSP3: Food and Beverage Legislation. At this meeting were present the Head of the School of Agriculture, representatives from MODIP and OMEA, and the directors of the three PSPs. The overview presentations and discussions followed provided information on the history, academic profile, status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern, degree compliance to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, etc for all three PSPs.

17:30-18:30 hrs: Links to watch videos about the AUTH and the School of Agriculture were provided. Separate video links were provided for each of the three PSPs. These videos were useful for the EEAP to assess classrooms, lecture halls, library facilities, laboratories and other related facilities that support the three PSPs. All the provided videos were viewed by EEAP members at their own convenient times. During the meeting a discussion was held with administrative staff to further evaluate facilities and learning resources as well as any relevant administrative support provided for the successful delivery of the three PSPs.

18:30-19:00 hrs: A final private meeting of the EEAP to debrief, summarize and reflect on the information provided and evaluated during the first day of meetings.

Tuesday, 27 January 2026

15:00-15:45 hrs: The EEAP met with the teaching staff of the PSP to discuss several issues relating to staff such as professional development, mobility, student evaluations of teaching, links between research and teaching, teaching staff expertise relating to this PSP, learning outcomes and any potential areas for improvement.

16:00-16:45 hrs: The EEAP met with student representatives of this PSP to discuss their overall experience so far, their satisfaction with teaching, facilities and support. The EEAP sought to obtain student input on any other aspect of student life and welfare too.

17:30-18:15 hrs: The EEAP met with graduates of this PSP to discuss their experience from their studies and whether their careers were supported by taking this PSP, as well as their current connections to the PSP.

18:30-19:15 hrs: The EEAP met with employers, social partners and stakeholders from the private and public sectors to discuss their relations with the PSP, their input in shaping the study program, their overall experience with the PSP and its relevance to the job market and the national economy. The EEAP member Dr. Seraphim Alvanides could not attend this meeting.

19:30-20:00 hrs: The EEAP met privately via the HAHE zoom link to debrief for the day's discussions and findings.

20:00-20:30 hrs: The EEAP joined the director of this PSP, the Head of School and representatives of MODIP and OMEA to provide summative feedback of the day's findings and to seek any clarifications where appropriate. The EEAP member Dr. Seraphim Alvanides could not attend this meeting.

Wednesday, 28 January 2026

The EEAP was fully occupied in multiple back-to-back meetings from 15:00 to 20:30 hrs to evaluate the PSP2 Food Science and Nutrition from the same department.

Thursday, 29 January 2026

The EEAP was fully occupied in multiple back-to-back meetings from 15:00 to 20:30 hrs to

evaluate the PSP3 Food and Beverage Legislation from the same department.

Friday 30 January to Saturday 31 January 2026

Report drafting and communications between EEAP members.
Detailed documentation was provided by the department on the HAHE website in accordance with the relevant requirements set by HAHE. Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEAP was in close communications with the Department and the PSPs' administrators, which were very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEAP. The EEAP found that the Department and the PSPs' administrators, the faculty staff, current students, stakeholders, social partners and recent graduates that were interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

## 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.*

This PSP started its operation from the academic year 2019-20 and resulted from the merger of two previous PSPs "Specialisation in Soil Science and Soil Resources Management" and "Specialisation in Agricultural Engineering and Water Resources" at the Department of Agriculture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) which operated from 2000 to 2019. The approval process followed all the necessary administrative approvals, and it was approved by the Assembly of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Environment of AUTH (meeting number 784/22-03-2018, positive recommendation number 20160/12-04-2018 of the Postgraduate Studies Committee, decision of the Council of AUTH number 17746/28-1-2015. It was published in the Government Gazette 258/issue B'/24-2-2015. The PSP regulations were subsequently amended by the Senate decision number 31426 (Meeting 2958) and published in the Government Gazette 252 issue B', 3/2/2020). In the revised regulations the availability of an internship through the ERASMUS program abroad was removed. Tuition fees were also introduced from the academic year 2024-25 at €500 per semester (€1,500 total) and they are paid in two instalments of €750 at the beginning of the first two semesters. In each academic year it is estimated that approximately 6 out of 20 students will be receiving full tuition fees scholarships. 28.6% of the PSP income used for the remuneration of the PSP teaching staff. The duration of this PSP was set at 5 years (2024-25 to 2029-30). During the years of its operation the PSP attracted 15, 20, 17, 8 and 9 students in the years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, respectively.

The PSP is a natural continuation of the undergraduate program from which it differs somewhat since the knowledge provided is more detailed and relevant to modern trends in the management of land, water, energy resources and the rural environment. The PSP courses are at an advanced level and do not overlap with the courses of the undergraduate program. The PSP students acquire additional specialized knowledge and skills and engage in research preparing their thesis dissertation and attending relevant laboratories. The learning outcomes are based on the European and National Qualifications Framework for level 7. The PSP is taught in Greek with student choice to write the dissertation Thesis either in Greek or English.

The PSP offers access to a wide range of services that support educational, cultural and social activities through AUTH. There is a wireless network on campus and access to academic

resources such as online databases, electronic journals and books. In addition, at the Department of Agriculture there is a library with a reading room and access to PCs.
During its first period of operation the PSP was provided entirely with in person teaching but since the coronavirus epidemic modern educational technologies supporting distant learning were implemented. In the reformed program in 2024 it is planned that 10% of teaching will be provided through modern distance learning methods using platforms such as ZOOM, Microsoft Teams etc. The current PSP provides for a maximum of 20 students per academic year and offers a total of 10 courses, 6 are compulsory and 4 electives chosen from a pool of 17 elective courses. Courses are delivered in afternoons considering the needs of working students.

The PSP is delivered in 3 academic semesters. The first semester entails compulsory courses in “Controlled Environmental Systems” (7 ECTS), “Water Resources Management” (7 ECTS), “Plant-Soil Environment Relationship” (7 ECTS), “Research Methodology 1” (2 ECTS), “Precision Agriculture and Resources Conservation” (7 ECTS), amounting to a total of 30 ECTS for the entire first semester. In the second semester there are 1 compulsory course (“Research Methodology 2 (2 ECTS)) and 4 electives out of a pool of 17 courses (each course is worth 7 ECTS). Two of the electives must be from a group of courses related to the dissertation Thesis, 1 more elective from another group, plus 1elective from a different group. The elective groups are 3 reflecting specialities in Soil, Water, and Energy Resources and Rural Environment. The total number of ECTS amounts to 30 for the second semester. The third semester is dedicated entirely to the dissertation Thesis and is worth 30 ECTS. The total number of ECTS for successful completion of this PSP is 90.
The teaching staff comprises 12 faculty members, 1 administrative staff. In addition to the permanent staff contributing to this PSP, there is the provision to include guest expert speakers and lecturers from other universities, companies and professional bodies nationally and internationally. The PSP Coordinating Committee regularly reviews the curriculum, teaching methods, facilities and infrastructure to ensure that they meet student needs.

The PSP subject area is cutting-edge and relevant to agricultural production needs and environmental issues in Greece today. Strengthening agricultural research in Greece will contribute to the development of new technologies to support the work of agronomists and other agriculturally relevant scientists leading to modernization and development of the country. PSP graduates will be able to pursue careers in the private and public sectors, in quality assurance, environmental protection, fertilizer and soil improvement products, soil laboratories, irrigation system companies, land improvement design projects, water management etc. There is some overlap with other PSPs offered at other Greek Universities (the Agricultural University of Athens (2 PSPs), the University of Thessaly (2 PSPs), the International Hellenic University, the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Democritus University of Thrace.

# 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 Institution has demonstrably incorporated the development, organisation and implementation of Postgraduate Study Programmes (PSPs) into its strategic management framework.

The establishment and operation of the PSP MSc Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and Rural Environment are formally authorised through decisions of the Institutional Senate and are fully aligned with the legal and regulatory framework, including compliance with Law 4957/2022, as documented in the published Government Gazette.
The PSP is clearly aligned with the Institution's profile, vision and mission, strengthening its academic presence in specialised scientific fields linked to environmental, agricultural, water and energy resource management.

The documentation includes dedicated feasibility and sustainability studies, which systematically assess academic relevance, labour-market demand, staffing capacity, infrastructure availability, financial viability, and long-term sustainability. These studies also benchmark the PSP against comparable national programmes, confirming its distinct academic orientation and added value.

The documentation submitted confirms that the PSP was designed following a systematic investigation of feasibility and sustainability. Dedicated studies analyse the academic rationale of the programme, its positioning within the national higher education landscape, the availability and suitability of teaching staff, the adequacy of infrastructure and support services, and the anticipated demand for graduates in the labour market. These studies also identify potential risks and challenges related to the implementation of the programme, such as fluctuations in student demand and resource requirements, and outline mitigating measures to ensure long-term viability.
Financial sustainability is addressed through a clearly documented tuition-fee utilisation framework, which demonstrates that income generated by the programme is sufficient to cover teaching, administrative and technical support, infrastructure, student services and quality assurance activities. The Institution has committed to ensuring that the PSP is supported by the necessary financial and human resources for its effective and uninterrupted operation.

In cases where distance or blended learning methods are employed, the Institution applies a formal e-learning strategy that is fully integrated into its overarching institutional strategy. This strategy defines educational objectives, pedagogical principles, technological infrastructure requirements and quality standards, while remaining responsive to rapid technological developments and evolving pedagogical models. The documentation provides a clear justification for the use of e-learning methods, demonstrating their appropriateness in relation to the programme's learning outcomes, feasibility considerations and the needs of the target student population.
The quality assurance policy for postgraduate study programmes is fully aligned

with the Institution's strategic planning and is articulated as a public policy statement implemented by all relevant stakeholders. The Academic Unit explicitly commits to promoting the academic profile and scientific orientation of the PSP, to achieving its stated objectives, and to determining the appropriate means for attaining them through structured quality procedures. The policy places particular emphasis on continuous improvement and accountability.

Governance and quality oversight responsibilities are clearly defined and allocated among institutional and academic bodies, including the Senate, the Department Assembly, the Coordinating Committee, the Programme Director, the Internal Evaluation Group and the Institutional Quality Assurance Unit. The documentation confirms that these bodies cooperate systematically in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the PSP on an annual basis, supported by the national quality information systems.
Evidence is provided that quality procedures are actively implemented and address all key dimensions of programme quality. These include the suitability of the programme's structure and organisation, the alignment of learning outcomes and qualifications with the European and National Qualifications Frameworks at Level 7, the quality and effectiveness of teaching, the appropriateness and availability of teaching staff, the formulation and review of annual quality objectives, the relevance of graduate qualifications to labour market needs, the quality of student support services, the efficient use of financial resources derived from tuition fees, and the conduct of regular internal reviews and audits of the quality assurance system.

**II. Analysis**

The evidence provided indicates a high level of strategic coherence between the PSP and the Institution's overall strategy. The use of Senate-approved decisions and formal regulatory frameworks demonstrates strong institutional ownership and accountability. The existence of detailed feasibility and sustainability studies provides assurance that the PSP has been designed and implemented based on systematic analysis rather than ad hoc decision-making.

The integration of quality assurance into strategic management is particularly strong. Quality policies are not treated as standalone procedural requirements but are embedded within governance, curriculum design, staff allocation, student support and financial planning. The regular collection and use of student feedback, together with documented responses to identified weaknesses, indicate a functioning quality-improvement cycle.

The e-learning strategy is appropriately justified and aligned with institutional priorities. Its integration into the broader strategic framework, rather than being programme-specific or temporary, supports sustainability and pedagogical consistency. The explicit consideration of innovation, programme revision and the teaching–research nexus further strengthens the PSP's academic robustness.

While the documentation demonstrates strong compliance overall, continued attention to stakeholder engagement (including employers and graduates) and systematic labour-market tracking would further enhance the evidence base supporting strategic decision-making and quality goal setting.
Minor areas for further enhancement relate primarily to the more systematic involvement of external stakeholders in quality-goal setting and the further formalisation of long-term graduate labour-market tracking as per submitted documentation. Effective links though with external stakeholders are already in place, including the establishment of an officially constituted industry advisory body with defined roles and functions. The Panel found it particularly strong and convincing that the Programme evidence long-standing, well-embedded collaborations with industry partners, supported by efficient communication channels developed through sustained engagement over time. These partnerships provide a solid foundation for ongoing enhancement and future formalisation of external input.

**III. Conclusions**

Based on the submitted documentation and the analysis above, the Study Programme is found to be fully compliant with Principle 1.

The Institution has successfully embedded the development and operation of the PSP within its strategic management framework, supported by Senate decisions, feasibility and sustainability studies, and a clearly articulated quality assurance policy. Quality assurance mechanisms are comprehensive, systematically implemented and aligned with institutional strategy, while e-learning and innovation are integrated in a coherent and forward-looking manner.

**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**

It is recommended that the academic unit develop a more structured, longitudinal mechanism for tracking graduates' professional trajectories.

Such a mechanism could include:

- periodic alumni surveys,
- qualitative feedback on the applicability of acquired competencies,
- and systematic analysis of career progression data.

It is recommended, as a next step, to explicitly link pedagogical innovation in e-learning with documented programme revision cycles, including:

- systematic evaluation of digital teaching methods,
- integration of emerging regulatory and scientific developments into online learning activities,
- and periodic review of e-learning effectiveness in achieving learning outcomes.

This would further strengthen the dynamic integration of technological developments, pedagogical models and research-informed teaching, in line with the Institution's strategic objectives.

## 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 "Management of soil, water, energy resources and rural environment" replaced the previous PSPs in "Soil Science and Soil Resource Management" and "Specialization in Agricultural Engineering and Water Resources" of the Department of Agriculture of the School of Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Environment of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, which operated in this form from 2000 to 2019. The new PSP was established by the decision of the Assembly of the Department of Agriculture of the School of Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Environment of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (meeting no. 784/22-03-2018, positive recommendation no. 20160/12-04-2018 of the Postgraduate Studies Committee, decision of the Council of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki no. 17746/28-1-2015 (FEK 258, B, 24/2/2015). The regulations governing the operation of the Postgraduate Studies Program were subsequently amended following the decision of the Senate No. 31426 (Meeting 2958, FEK 252, B, 3/2/2020).

The shaping of the PSP's academic profile, orientation, and specific subjects, as well as its learning objectives, are harmonized with the strategy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The MODIP of the Institution, in collaboration with the Internal Evaluation Team (OEA) of the Department and the Director of the PSP, are responsible for submitting the Certification documents to HAHE. The documents are expected to comply with all the requirements of the Academic Certification Standard, within the framework of the principles and guidelines of HAHE and the Internal Quality Assurance System (ESDP) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The scientific fields of the PSP are related to the use of automation in agriculture, satellite monitoring of agricultural resources using Earth observation tools and their spatial analysis using geoinformatics techniques, applications of sensor networks and artificial intelligence in precision agriculture, supply chain management, agricultural engineering, mechanical harvesting, energy saving from renewable resources and energy saving in agricultural applications and constructions, the design of modern greenhouse facilities, the design and construction of livestock buildings, the design and operation of irrigation and drainage networks, waste in increasing soil fertility, integrated management of soil nutrients, the study and protection of soil biodiversity and the use of soil microorganisms in agriculture.

The overall aim of the PSP is to promote knowledge, develop research, and satisfy the educational, research, social, cultural, and developmental needs of the country in training high-level scientists capable of excelling in theoretical and applied areas of agricultural science, particularly in the fields of Water Resource Management in Agriculture, Soil Science, and Agricultural Engineering, as well as in the production and transmission of knowledge, know-how, methodologies, tools, and research results in the scientific field of agricultural science. During its operation, the PSP has attracted 15, 20, 17, 8 and 9 students in academic years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively, while the number of applications has been higher. The postgraduate program focuses on agricultural production and environmental challenges in Greece, topics of ongoing relevance within the broader landscape of postgraduate studies.

## II. Analysis

The intended learning outcomes for students following this PSP are:

- excellent knowledge of the subject matter
- knowledge of research methodology
- ability to independently conduct research and write academic work with the ability to analyze, synthesize, and interpret information, make quick and informed decisions, apply knowledge in practice, adapt to new situations, improvement of communication skills
- ability to work autonomously and collaboratively, development of interdisciplinarity
- ability to generate new research ideas
- social, professional, and ethical responsibility and sensitivity to issues of gender, diversity, and interculturalism.

The basic principles of the PSP's organization and operation are: a student-centered approach to learning, with a focus on strengthening student motivation and active participation in the educational process; an interdisciplinary approach; the relevance of the individual subjects of the program to the subject of geotechnical studies as a whole; the consistency between the teaching activities of the PSP and those of the undergraduate program of the Department of Agriculture; the connection between theory and practice, teaching and research; the evaluation of the program through multiple feedback procedures.

As evident from the individual course outlines and the PSP regulations, the learning approach is student-centered and the active participation of students plays a central role in the learning process and in achieving learning outcomes. There is strong evidence that students build knowledge gradually, in different ways, reflectively and through their learning experience, for with their active participation in the learning process and in the design of their individual learning path. There is also strong evidence that through the various forms of learning techniques and practices, individualized and collaborative, the students develop

critical skills, enhance their autonomy of thought and their ability to evaluate information and tackle theoretical and practical issues in a creative and innovative way. These skills are essential for their successful professional and scientific careers.
A central role in shaping the curriculum and teaching methods is played by improving the professional training opportunities of graduates. Thus, in parallel with theoretical knowledge, the program offers professional and research skills (e.g., laboratory experience) that students can utilize in many different professional fields. In addition, the students are required to complete an original scientific research project on a topic related to the knowledge they acquire during their studies.

The PSP admits a maximum of 20 students per year, offers a total of six (6) compulsory postgraduate courses and four (4) elective courses, from a selection of seventeen (17). After successfully completing all courses in the first two semesters, students write and defend a postgraduate Thesis in the third semester. Before the start of the second semester, each student chooses a supervisor and, in collaboration, they determine the subject of the postgraduate Thesis as well as the specialized courses from the course groups that match its subject. Each instructor may not supervise more than two students per academic year. The total number of credits (ECTS) required to graduate is 90.

**III. Conclusions**

The PSP "Management of soil, water, energy resources and rural environment" complies fully with the HAHE requirements of Principle 2.

The design and approval procedures have been followed comprehensively. The academic staff are experts in their respective fields and deliver teaching related to their research interests. The PSP utilizes the interdisciplinary and specialized research experience of the teaching staff to familiarize students with contemporary scientific trends, developments and cutting-edge issues in the respective study and research field. The online materials are clearly presented and the comprehensive student guide is available in Greek and in English.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

The EEAP recommends reducing the number of electives in the second semester to enhance curriculum coherence, ensure an appropriate student workload, and strengthen alignment between course offerings and the PSP's intended learning outcomes.

## 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 Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and Rural Environment focuses delivers advanced knowledge in soil science, water and energy resources, and agricultural environmental issues. The PSP has been active since 1973 and has produced numerous distinguished alumni. The program's foundation lies in a well-motivated student body, fostering learning and deep knowledge of the subject topics. Student participation is strong, with assignments that contribute to transferable knowledge across various scientific fields. Instruction is delivered in person, with moderately flexible hours, encouraging concurrent employment as outlined in program study regulations. The PSP adopts a student-centered approach to learning and teaching, combining theoretical and applied courses that foster intense participation, collaborative learning, and the development of creative and critical thinking. Students particularly value the lectures, which they describe as engaging and intellectually stimulating, providing opportunities for in-depth discussion and exchange of ideas.

The academic advisor's role, defined by departmental regulations, complements the relatively small student cohort, reinforcing the student-centered approach. A platform for student complaints and appeals is available, ensuring concerns are promptly addressed. Beyond educational needs, the program aims to address the regional and national broader social needs. Instructors are evaluated by postgraduate students at the end of each semester through anonymous electronic submissions to the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP/AUTH). Teaching evaluation questionnaires, based on the MODIP model, provide insights into course content, usefulness, and instructor effectiveness. Student participation in course evaluation surveys is good, and the feedback collected is positive regarding course content, structure, and teaching methods, as well as the accessibility and support provided by the academic staff.

According to instructors and graduates, the PSP offers a comprehensive study program within a framework of mutual respect. The number of students continuing to doctoral studies or collaborating with the faculty on research projects after graduation is evidence for strong links with research. There is frequent communication between students and teaching staff, which enhances smooth operation of the PSP and enables timely resolution of academic and administrative issues. The schedule is designed with some flexibility to accommodate working students, demonstrating the PSP’s adaptability to the diverse needs of its participants. The low student-to-faculty ratio allows an outstanding opportunity for learning and the development of close relations between students and instructors. Both current students and past graduates expressed their enthusiasm for the PSP, highlighting its contributions to their academic and professional development and its positive impact on their creativity.

## II. Analysis

The PSP demonstrates a coherent and effective implementation of student-centered learning and teaching principles. The integration of theoretical, research, and applied courses promotes creativity, active engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The emphasis on teamwork and critical thinking enables students to develop both conceptual and practical skills, reflecting the program's multidisciplinary philosophy.

Frequent, open communication between students and faculty fosters a supportive and responsive learning environment. This direct interaction encourages continuous feedback, enabling the PSP to address important issues and adapt teaching methods accordingly. The flexible schedule further facilitates participation, particularly for working students, ensuring inclusiveness and accessibility within the learning process.

Assessment methods are clear, transparent, and aligned with the intended learning outcomes, including project work, presentations, and thesis evaluation by a three-member faculty committee. The teaching evaluation questionnaires are limited to course and instructor quality. Thus, it is difficult to assess student learning and competence.

The existence of a formal regulation for managing complaints and appeals enhances transparency and fairness in academic and administrative procedures. Although the low student-to-faculty ratio is highly beneficial to the program's quality, it may become a concern for the PSP's future viability.

While the academic advisor’s role is formally established, further communication and awareness could strengthen its effectiveness in guiding students throughout their studies. Likewise, the course evaluation suggests that introducing learning assessment questions could enhance the effectiveness of the formal feedback process.

The program's structure integrates theoretical courses and a Diploma thesis, aligning with a student-centered approach. The first two semesters focus on in-person, theoretical, and applied courses with mandatory attendance, while the third semester is devoted to thesis research. Students expressed satisfaction with the flexible program and its well-organized lectures. Furthermore, PSP graduates expressed high satisfaction with their Diploma thesis projects, leading to opportunities for doctoral studies or industry employment. Social partners praised the graduates for the scientific knowledge and expertise acquired through their PSP degree.
Overall, the PSP effectively applies the principles of student-centered learning and assessment, maintaining close interaction between students and faculty and promoting an educational culture that values creativity, collaboration, and reflective practice.

### III. Conclusions

The PSP effectively implements a student-centered approach to learning and teaching, fostering active participation, collaboration, and creative thinking within a supportive and flexible academic environment. Course design and delivery are meticulously aligned with the intended learning outcomes, and continuous communication between students and faculty contributes to ongoing program improvement.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

Reassess the enrollment limits and course offerings of the PSP, aiming for a moderate increase in admissions and fewer elective courses.

Consider an enhancement of the course evaluation questionnaires with emphasis on the assessment of student learning and competence.

## PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AND CERTIFICATION.

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, THESIS DRAFTING, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).**

*All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:*

- *the student admission procedures and the required supporting documents*
- *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- *internship issues, if applicable, and granting of scholarships*
- *the procedures and terms for the drafting of assignments and the thesis*
- *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and for the assurance of the progress of students in their studies*
- *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

*All the above must be made public in the context of the Student Guide.*

***Documentation***

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the Postgraduate Study Programme*
- *Research Ethics Regulation*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Degree certificate template*

### Study Programme Compliance

#### I. Findings

The PSP is supported by a network of collaborating laboratories covering the scientific fields of Soil Science, Hydraulics, Agricultural Engineering, Remote Sensing and GIS, Agricultural Constructions, and Renewable Energy Resources in Agriculture.

The PSP has a structured duration of three academic semesters and follows the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), corresponding to a total of 90 ECTS credits. The first semester consists exclusively of compulsory courses, while the second semester includes elective courses organized into three

thematic groups (without formal specialization tracks). During the second semester, students select the topic and supervisor of their postgraduate thesis. The third semester is fully devoted to the preparation of the Master's thesis (30 ECTS).

Approximately nine students are admitted on average each academic year. While this number allows for close communication between students and faculty and supports individualized academic guidance, the Program has recorded a decline in the number of applications in recent years. The PSP includes tuition fees amounting to €1,500. In accordance with the applicable institutional and national framework, provisions for exemption from tuition fees are in place, while scholarships may also be awarded to eligible students under the relevant regulations.

Through official announcements and the Student Guide, newly admitted students are informed about the PSP's requirements, structure, and regulations. All relevant information and supporting material are publicly available on the PSP's website (https://msc-deep.agro.auth.gr/odigos-spoudon-2/ ). An academic advisor is appointed for each student, and close collaboration with thesis supervisors is maintained throughout the study period.

Student progress is assessed through a combination of written examinations, assignments, presentations, and continuous evaluation, depending on the course. Assessment methods are communicated at the beginning of each semester. The postgraduate thesis constitutes a core, research-based component of the PSP, follows a clearly regulated process, and is publicly defended before a three-member examination committee, in accordance with institutional regulations.
The PSP does not include mandatory internships and does not assign ECTS credits to practical placements. Nevertheless, students are strongly encouraged to participate in laboratory work, field exercises, applied research activities, and national or international research projects. Opportunities for student mobility and participation in Erasmus+ schemes are supported in line with the institutional framework of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

## II. Analysis

The PSP demonstrates a clear alignment with contemporary academic and professional needs. By combining soil science, hydraulics, agricultural engineering, and contemporary tools such as remote sensing and artificial intelligence, the Program adopts an interdisciplinary approach that facilitates the achievement of its learning outcomes and reinforces research-based learning.

The relatively small number of admitted students facilitates high-quality supervision and close academic interaction, consistent with the Program's research-oriented and laboratory-intensive profile. At the same time, the persistently low intake, together with the reduction in applications observed in

recent years, constitutes an important contextual element for the PSP. Within this framework, cases of extended study duration, temporary interruption, and, in a limited number of instances, withdrawal have been recorded. These situations are addressed through the flexibility foreseen in the regulatory framework, which allows for justified extensions of studies and individualized academic support, thereby safeguarding student progression without compromising academic standards.

Clear study regulations, together with the Student Guide and the academic advisor system, support transparency and student progression, while close collaboration with supervisors during the thesis phase enhances academic engagement. ECTS credits are applied consistently throughout the PSP, with a structured distinction between coursework and thesis requirements. This organization supports compatibility with European higher education standards and facilitates academic recognition and mobility.
The research-based character of the Master's thesis, supported by access to specialized laboratories and close supervision, reinforces the Program's academic profile and contributes to the development of students' research and analytical skills.

Although internships are not formally embedded in the curriculum, the PSP compensates through strong emphasis on laboratory training, fieldwork, and participation in applied research activities. These elements provide students with practical skills that complement theoretical knowledge. Student mobility and participation in external academic activities are encouraged, though further formalization of mobility recognition procedures could enhance international dimension.

## III. Conclusions

The PSP "Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and the Agricultural Environment" is a well-organized and academically coherent postgraduate program, grounded in a strong research tradition within the Department of Agriculture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Its three-semester structure and total workload of 90 ECTS credits are appropriate for the Program's learning objectives and support both theoretical depth and applied research competence.
The PSP benefits from close interaction between students and academic staff, research-oriented thesis work, and access to well-equipped laboratory infrastructure. These elements contribute positively to student progression and the overall quality of studies. Transparent assessment procedures and a clearly regulated thesis process provide a stable framework for academic reliability and credibility.

At the same time, the PSP operates within a broader socioeconomic context that shapes student participation patterns. Variations in application numbers and instances of extended study duration observed among some students constitute

external contextual factors that are not directly linked to the academic design or instructional quality of the Program. Within this framework, the PSP demonstrates responsiveness by supporting students through structured academic guidance and the regulated flexibility provided by its institutional framework.

Overall, the PSP meets the requirements of Principle 4 regarding student admission, progression, assessment, and certification. Its interdisciplinary scope and integration of research activities offer a solid academic basis for the education of graduates in the fields of soil, water, energy, and agricultural environment management.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

The EEAP recommends reconsidering the minimum required level of English language proficiency for admission to the Program. Upgrading the requirement from B2 to C1 could better support students' engagement with scientific literature, academic writing, and research dissemination.

The EEAP recommends that the Department systematically monitors enrolment trends and consider appropriate actions at Program level to support student recruitment and the sustainability of enrolment levels over time.

## 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 regulations governing the recruitment of faculty members and laboratory teaching staff (EDIP) are established by the Greek Parliament. AUTH as a public university, strictly follows these regulations. The roles of the PSP and the Department of Agriculture are therefore limited to selecting the best candidate when the Ministry of Education grants a faculty position. The EEA Panel found that the faculty of the PSP in Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources, and Rural Environment has extensive experience in the PSP's topics and strong qualifications to teach the program's courses. Furthermore, some senior faculty members have an excellent record of research accomplishments. During the meeting with the EEA Panel, the faculty expressed their devotion to the PSP and the Department of Agriculture in general.

The faculty's teaching responsibilities consist of two courses per semester, which provides adequate time for research engagement. Faculty also co-teach and involve external lecturers, freeing up additional time for research. The low targets for student admissions to the PSP further reduce the time faculty devote to teaching, allowing them to pursue other professional endeavors. However, there is no evidence of a formal mentoring process for early-career faculty, nor is there any mention of significant support, such as travel funds, equipment, or teaching allowances, to accelerate their professional development. Furthermore, there is low participation and support for sabbatical leaves in the Department.

There is a system in place for evaluating courses and instructors; however, there is no specific mechanism for systematically assessing student learning or for continuous improvement. There is a worrisome combination of low enrollment, a high number of elective courses, and a high number of faculty teaching in the PSP. It is not evident that this happens by design.

Overall, the Department's research activities, publications, and funding are good and commensurate with those of similar graduate programs in Greek universities. There are strong links between teaching and research in the PSP, and students' graduate theses often lead to journal publications.

**II. Analysis**

The EEAP found that the faculty of the PSP is highly qualified and that their productivity is commensurate with that of leading research universities in Greece and Europe. The Department of Agriculture claims that mobility is important to the faculty, staff, and students. This is evidenced through participation in conferences and some Erasmus+ exchanges. However, there is no systematic approach to provide additional support for the mobility of early-career faculty members. Sabbatical leaves abroad are not particularly encouraged or supported financially by the Department.

Linking teaching to research seems natural, as most students complete their theses on topics covered in the required and elective courses. Most of the instructors research the subjects they teach in the PSP; thus, it is very easy to transfer their new findings into the classroom.

The PSP focuses on the Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources, and Rural Environment, which requires significant interdisciplinary efforts. The main strength of the PSP is its coverage of these subjects at the graduate level. Thus, it is important to increase the involvement of advanced materials in these areas. The program's declining popularity suggests it may be wise to redesign the PSP and course materials to address current and emerging problems in the subject areas that require immediate solutions.

### III. Conclusions

Faculty members of the PSP Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources, and Rural Environment are well qualified to teach the program's courses. The link between teaching and research is very good. Limited opportunities for faculty mobility exist, and teaching responsibilities are low to moderate. This allows for the career development of early-career faculty; however, there is no established, systematic mentoring or specific processes to enhance the professional development of new hires.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

Introduce a mentoring process for early-career faculty and other teaching staff to accelerate their professional development and promotion.

Encourage and support the sabbatical leave process.

Consider redesigning the PSP to address better current and emerging needs of society.

## 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 PSP is offered by the Department of Agriculture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and is implemented through in-person teaching, laboratory work, and field-based activities. The PSP makes systematic use of the Department's and the Institution's existing infrastructure, human resources, and support services to meet its teaching and learning objectives.

The PSP is supported by academic staff from multiple laboratories of the Department, covering the fields of soil science, agricultural hydraulics, agricultural engineering, remote sensing, renewable energy, and agricultural constructions.

Teaching and research activities are conducted in a network of well-established laboratories equipped with specialized scientific and technical infrastructure that supports experimental work, applied research, and postgraduate thesis preparation.
For teaching purposes, the PSP has access to multiple lecture rooms and computer laboratories of the Department of Agriculture, appropriately equipped with audiovisual systems, IT infrastructure, and climate control. Dedicated spaces for postgraduate students, including study rooms and office areas, are also available and support individual and group academic work.

The PSP benefits from the extensive central services of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Students have access to the institutional e-learning platforms, the electronic student registry system, and a wide-ranging wireless network across university premises. The Central Library and the departmental library branch provide access to printed and electronic academic resources, international scientific databases, and study spaces, while training on information literacy and bibliographic research is also available.
Administrative support for the PSP is currently provided by the Secretariat of the Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for student registration, certification, grade records, and general student services. Academic support is further reinforced through the appointment of academic advisors and close collaboration between students and thesis supervisors throughout the duration of studies.

In addition to academic and administrative services, PSP students enjoy full access to the student welfare and support structures of the Institution. These include social support services, scholarships and financial aid schemes, health and psychological counselling, career guidance, accessibility services for students with disabilities, and structures promoting equality, inclusion, and student well-being. Information on available services is disseminated through institutional websites, electronic platforms, and official announcements.

The PSP charges tuition fees of €1,500. According to the submitted tuition utilisation plan and feasibility studies, financial resources are allocated to support teaching activities, laboratory consumables, administrative needs, and the overall sustainability of the Program, under the financial management framework of the University's Research Committee (ELKE).

**II. Analysis**

The learning resources and student support services available to the PSP are broadly adequate and appropriate for its academic scope, research orientation, and laboratory-intensive character. The PSP benefits significantly from the strong infrastructural base of the Department of Agriculture and from the integration of central institutional services, ensuring that postgraduate students have access to modern facilities and digital learning environments.

The availability of specialized laboratories and field equipment constitutes a major strength, as it enables hands-on training and supports research-based learning, which is central to the Program's objectives. The relatively small number of enrolled students allows effective use of these resources and facilitates close supervision, without placing excessive pressure on laboratory capacity.

Student support services are well embedded within the institutional framework of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Administrative processes are clearly organized, while academic advising and supervision provide individualized guidance, particularly during the thesis phase. At the same time, reliance on departmental secretarial support, rather than a dedicated PSP secretariat, may increase administrative workload during peak periods.

While the tuition utilisation plan demonstrates financial viability, evidence from student progression patterns suggests that financial constraints related to tuition fees and living costs may affect timely completion for a subset of students. This highlights the importance of continued monitoring of student needs and of exploring complementary support mechanisms within the existing institutional framework.

Overall, the internal quality assurance mechanisms in place allow the Department and the PSP to monitor the adequacy of facilities and services and to ensure that students are informed of available support structures.

**III. Conclusions**

The PSP "Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and the Agricultural Environment" is supported by a robust set of learning resources and student support services that are consistent with its academic objectives and research-oriented profile. The combination of specialized laboratory infrastructure, institutional digital services, academic advising, and student welfare provisions provides a solid foundation for effective learning and postgraduate research.

The PSP demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to maintaining adequate resources and support mechanisms. Overall, the PSP satisfies the requirements of Principle 6, ensuring that learning resources and student support services are sufficient, accessible, and aligned with the needs of postgraduate students.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

The EEAP encourages the PSP to further explore opportunities that enhance students' practical and professional exposure, including participation in Erasmus+ mobility schemes and initiatives supporting young entrepreneurship. In this context, strengthening collaboration with external stakeholders—such as through the donation of surplus or legacy equipment—could enrich hands-on training and further improve the overall student learning experience.

## 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**

In addition to the MODIP, the Department of Agriculture has its own Internal Evaluation Team (OMEA), responsible for the internal evaluation of study programs and the preparation of external evaluations, as well as for evaluating the PSP, in collaboration with the Program Committee. The Department follows a policy that actively involves students in the development of postgraduate programs, regularly requesting their evaluation and incorporating their comments into the redesign of the PSP. The Department seeks and implements continuous evaluation of the postgraduate programs, regularly reviews the curriculum, teaching methods and its facilities and infrastructure to ensure that they meet the student needs.

Internal evaluation is continuous and evaluation questionnaires concern each taught course and each instructor separately. The Internal Evaluation Team (IET) of the Department in collaboration with the MODIP of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, are responsible for conducting the evaluation for the period of the PSP study. The evaluation is carried out through the latter's Quality Management Information System (QMIS). Study satisfaction questionnaires have also been introduced, which graduates complete before receiving their diplomas.

**II. Analysis**

There is strong evidence of the specific PSP seeking feedback from students and faculty to identify areas for improvement. Feedback is used to consider and implement any changes to the PSP, including updating the curriculum, changes in teaching methods, and upgrades to facilities. The annual internal evaluation and review also assess the quality assurance system of all postgraduate programs (including this PSP) with the assistance of MODIP.

The evaluation questionnaires are standard forms prepared by MODIP, while the Coordinating Committee may, by decision, modify them to meet the specific characteristics and needs of the PSP or specific courses. They are completed electronically, and the Coordinating Committee and the Departmental Internal Evaluation Committee take systematic action to encourage students to participate in the evaluation. Specifically for this PSP, after the end of each evaluation period and following the announcement of the semester course grades, the evaluation results are analysed and the findings published (while observing the legislation on the protection of personal data), alongside action for addressing any issues.

The requested data are entered annually into the Integrated Quality Information System of HAHE and that the indicators are used to prepare the annual Quality Targets, in accordance with HAHE’s guidelines.

**III. Conclusions**

The University and the Department collect the required amount of data regarding student registration, progression and satisfaction, analyse such data comprehensively with the view of improving performance and satisfaction, and store the data observing relevant legislation and reporting requirements.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

No recommendations.

## 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 Panel finds that the Institution has established clear and systematic mechanisms for the public dissemination of information relating to the PSP MSc Management of Soil, Water, Energy Resources and Rural Environment. Information concerning the academic identity, structure, governance, delivery, and outcomes of the Programme is made available through official and easily identifiable institutional channels, primarily via the dedicated PSP website and the University's central academic and quality assurance platforms.

The publicly available information covers the Programme, including its objectives, intended learning outcomes, curriculum structure, awarded degree, study regulations, teaching and assessment methods, student support services, and graduate prospects. The Panel confirms that this information is presented in a manner that is coherent, institutionally approved, and consistent with the formal regulatory documents governing the Programme.

Furthermore, the PSP maintains a bilingual online presence, with information provided in both Greek and English, thereby ensuring accessibility for national and international audiences. The availability of official documentation, such as the Study Regulations, course descriptions, and Diploma Supplement templates, enhances transparency and allows stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of the academic standards and expectations associated with the Programme.

#### II. Analysis

The Institution's approach to public information provision demonstrates a strong alignment with the requirements of Principle 8. The existence of a dedicated PSP

website, integrated within the wider institutional digital ecosystem, ensures that information is readily accessible and centrally managed. This integration supports consistency between the Programme-level information and the University's overarching academic and quality assurance frameworks.

The depth and clarity of the information provided regarding teaching, learning, and assessment procedures are particularly noteworthy. Course descriptions explicitly articulate learning outcomes, ECTS allocation, teaching methods, and assessment criteria, thereby supporting informed decision-making by prospective students and transparency for enrolled students. This level of detail reflects a mature quality culture and adherence to national and European standards for postgraduate education.

In relation to quality assurance and performance, the Panel notes that information derived from student evaluations and quality monitoring processes is systematically collected and publicly referenced through institutional quality assurance systems. Although detailed statistical data such as pass rates are primarily managed through internal and national reporting systems, the Programme ensures that quality-related information and improvement actions are communicated in an objective and aggregated manner, in line with data protection and academic governance requirements.

The information concerning graduate outcomes and employment perspectives is appropriately contextualised within the Programme's academic orientation and labour-market relevance. References to professional pathways, research opportunities, and progression to doctoral studies are supported by feasibility and sustainability analyses, reinforcing the credibility and usefulness of the published information for external stakeholders.

The Institution has put in place clear responsibilities and procedures for the maintenance and updating of public information. The alignment of online content with Senate decisions, updated Study Regulations, and legislative requirements ensures that information remains current, accurate, and authoritative over time.

**III. Conclusions**

The Panel concludes that the Institution meets the requirements of Principle 8 to a high standard. Public information concerning the Postgraduate Study Programme is comprehensive, transparent, up to date, and easily accessible, serving effectively the needs of prospective students, current students, graduates, stakeholders, and the wider public. The bilingual presentation, institutional consistency, and strong linkage between published information and formally approved documentation collectively demonstrate a well-established and sustainable approach to public information provision.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

Enhance stakeholder-facing information on industry engagement.
Building on the Programme's strong and well-established collaborations with industry partners, the Panel recommends making more explicit reference on the PSP website to the role, composition and contributions of the Industry Advisory Body, including examples of how external input informs curriculum review and programme enhancement.

Introduce periodic public review updates.
The Institution may wish to consider publishing brief annual or biennial public updates summarising key developments, curriculum enhancements or quality improvement actions arising from student feedback and programme review processes, further reinforcing transparency and continuous improvement.

## 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 has started the process of regular monitoring, review and revision with the collaboration of the Coordinating Committee, the Department's OMEA and the Institution's MODIP. These internal evaluation activities are in accordance with HAHE requirements and standards. The PSP was evaluated by MODIP in 2024 and several recommendations were made in a report submitted to the PSP by MODIP.

**II. Analysis**

The internal evaluation process adopted by the PSP monitors specific indicators such as the popularity of the PSP subject matter, student evaluation of courses and teaching, research quality, mobility, administrative and student support

services, stakeholder and social partner involvement, graduate career monitoring etc. This is in line with the Quality Policy of AUTH and the Department. The internal evaluation by MODIP in 2024 identified that the PSP website does not include information regarding complaints regulations, academic advisor, mobility regulations etc It was recommended that the PSP website must be regularly updated to provide all necessary information to current students, alumni and stakeholders/social partners. Other recommendations were also made to strengthen the research quality of the PSP with more international collaborations, to strengthen student mobility opportunities and the attendance at international conferences, and the strengthening of the role of the Academic Advisor.

**III. Conclusions**

The PSP is engaging in a continuous process of internal evaluations of several key indicators in line with HAHE recommendations and standards. The EEAP considers that the PSP is Fully Compliant with Principle 9.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

Continue with the monitoring of key PSP indicators in accordance with HAHE recommendations and standards annually.

Publish the findings of such internal evaluations on the PSP website together with the actions taken to address any emerging issues.

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

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

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

***Documentation***

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

### Study Programme Compliance

**I. Findings**

This PSP has not been evaluated by any external panel of experts until now. There was an external evaluation of AUTH in 2015, and some general institutional weaknesses were noted and recommendations made. However, in the progress report submitted by MODIP to HAHE in 2018, it was stated that the individual requirements of different academic subjects do not allow for generalized implementations and it was left up to Departmental general Assemblies whether to adopt or not these general recommendations.

**II. Analysis**

Since no PSP external evaluation has been conducted for this PSP in all its years of operation there is not much the EEAP can analyze here. The EEAP would point out that perhaps MODIP should have been a bit more assertive in enforcing the general recommendations from the 2015 Institutional external evaluation, as appropriate, rather than to hand this responsibility back to departmental assemblies on an ad hoc basis.

**III. Conclusions**

No external evaluations have been conducted for this PSP until now. The department has cooperated in the most constructive way with the EEAP in this HAHE-coordinated external evaluation and appears to be committed to fully implementing all recommendations in the pursue of excellence in academic practice. Since no external evaluation has been conducted until now, the EEAP finds that the PSP is Partially Compliant to Principle 10. The EEAP understands that external evaluations were not required by legislation, but on a voluntary

basis such external evaluations should have been done as part of good academic practice.

**Panel Judgement**

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

**Panel Recommendations**

Implement fully all recommendations by this external evaluation exercise.

Voluntary external evaluations, above and beyond current legislation, should be considered for the future as appropriate to ensure good academic practice in the pursue of excellence.

## PART C: CONCLUSIONS

### I. Features of Good Practice

Excellent teaching staff, enthusiastic, appropriate expertise and research active.

PSP subject matter important for the national economy.

Good infrastructure facilities and support services.

Well-defined and focused curriculum.

Excellent student satisfaction.

## II. Areas of Weakness

Too many elective courses in the second semester.

No structured peer review of teaching.

No structured personal development plans for staff.

Number of students shows a decreasing trend in the past few years.

No organised sabbatical system to allow staff research/teaching mobility opportunities.

## III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Reduce the number of elective courses in the second semester.

Introduce a structured system for annual peer review of teaching for staff.

Introduce annual personal development plans for staff.

Increase student numbers closer to 20.

Encourage and support the sabbatical leave process and encourage mobility.

Make more explicit reference on the PSP website to the role, composition and contributions of the Industry Advisory Body, including examples of how external input informs curriculum review and programme enhancement.

Link pedagogical innovation in e-learning with documented programme revision cycles.

Upgrade the English language requirement from B2 to C1.

## IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Nil.

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

10

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

Nil.

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

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

| Name and Surname | Signature |
|---|---|
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