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Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography

Department: Philology

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 24/07/2025

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 New Postgraduate Study Programme of Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography 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 new postgraduate study programme of Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. VERNADAKIS EMMANUEL (Chair)
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Faculté des lettres, langues et sciences humaines, Université d'Angers
   (Institution of origin)

2. CHIKOVANI ANA
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Department of Modern Greek Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
   (Institution of origin)

3. Tchkoidze Eka
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   Ilia State University
   (Institution of origin)

4. TSOULAS GEORGE
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   University of York
   (Institution of origin)

5. Κωστάκης Δημοσθένης
   (Title, Name, Surname)
   University of Ioannina
   (Institution of origin)

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

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

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel
The Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (POSTGRADP2136) was reviewed by a panel of five members, registered with the HAHE (in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 and 4653/2020). The members were:
Professor Emeritus Emmanuel Vernadakis (chair)
Université d'Angers, France
Professor George Tsoulas
University of York, England
Associate Professor Ana Chikovani
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
Associate Professor Eka Tchkoidze
Ilia State University, Georgia
and
Δημοσθένης Κωστάκης
Doctoral candidate, University of Ioannina

The remote accreditation review took place between Monday, 14 July and Saturday, 19 July 2025. The quality of the support material, which was made available ten days before the process began, was high. Thirty well-crafted documents were provided, offering information on the accreditation process, guidelines for academic advisors, and details on the teaching and research environment at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and its Department of Philology. This included a study guide, course syllabi, the internal self-assessment report of MODIP, teaching staff information, and the accreditation proposal. Panel members studied this documentation, as well as additional material uploaded to the website.
On Monday, 14 July, the Panel held a private meeting to discuss the documentation. The focus was on structuring the interviews, allocating questions and dividing up the tasks according to each member's skills. These measures were taken to ensure that the assessment process went smoothly.

On 15 July 2025, six meetings were scheduled during the virtual visit.
The first was with the Vice-Rector, the President of MODIP, and some MODIP members;
the second with the PSP teaching staff;
the third with the programme's admin staff;
the fourth with social partners and stakeholders;
the fifth with the panel members only to share comments;
and the sixth with the teaching staff, MODIP members, and the Vice-Rector to discuss first impressions.

The following schedule was followed for the six meetings that were part of the virtual visit:
10:00 - 11:00
Meeting with:
• Prof. Nikolaos Maggioros, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Planning Development, President of MODIP;
• Prof. Ioanna Karamanou, Head of the Department;
• Prof. Ilias Taxidis, Director of the PSP;
• Prof. Vasileios Fyntikoglou, MODIP Committee Member;
• Alexandra Tzaneraki, MODIP Committee Secretary;
and
• Polyxeni Poutiou, MODIP Staff.

The meeting was opened by the Vice-Rector, Prof. Nikolaos Maggioros, who, together with Mrs A. Tzaneraki, welcomed the panel members. The Vice-Rector stressed that all university programmes are subject to the prerogatives of national and European legislation, as well as the HAHE's (ΕΘΑΑΕ) framing instructions. Professors Karamanou and Taxidis provided critical commentary on two presentations, the first relating to the Department of Philology and the second to the proposed PSP. The presentations and subsequent discussions provided context for the academic profile, status, strengths, and potential areas of concern of the PSP. They highlighted the department's commitment to ensuring the effectiveness of the programme and clarified several aspects of its design, philosophy, and structure. It turned out that some details of these issues could not be addressed or explored in depth within the strict framework of the documents submitted on the platform relating to its description.

11.00-11.45
Meeting with seven EEAP members of the PSP:
• Prof. Sofia Kotzabassi;
• Prof. Panagiota Sarischouli;
• Prof. Ilias Taxidis;
• Prof. Ioannis Vassis;
• Assist. Prof. Dimitrios Nikou;
• Assist. Prof. Dimitra Samara, and
• Assist. Prof. Christos Simelidis.

Discussions between the teaching team and members of the panel were rich and useful. In addition to the previous presentations, they emphasised several features of the future PSP. Notably, combining Byzantine literature and papyrology within a single PSP is unprecedented, as these fields are rarely considered together.

The proposed PSP, which combines Byzantine studies with papyrology and palaeography, will therefore have a unique profile, both nationally and internationally. The steps currently being taken to include this PSP in an international Erasmus Mundus Master's programme, the online international journal Parekvolai, the close collaborative links maintained by each

member of the teaching team with universities, research networks, public and private institutions, libraries and archives worldwide, the annual international conferences and the colloquia organised regularly during the semesters with international speakers have all served to make the programme appear internationally open.

In response to the panel's question regarding the lack of information about work placements in the documents made available, the teaching team explained that, in the absence of a framework decree allowing PSP students to undertake paid work, they had to be introduced to the reality of their working environment free of charge. However, this introduction is made possible by the manuscripts, papyri, etc. housed in the palaeography and codicology laboratory at Aristotle University. There, students are exposed to the conservation of the Byzantine heritage of the Hellenic world. They are also entrusted with assignments by local institutions, such as museums, schools, research centres, associations, publishing houses and libraries. This will enable graduates of the programme to integrate easily into the job market, as was confirmed later during the panel's meeting with stakeholders, and which was also confirmed by seven graduates of the previous programme, who have already embarked on university careers.

In response to another question, the director of the PSP explained that the new programme is a carefully considered reworking of a previous one. This will make the programme more open to interdisciplinarity and, consequently, to the international arena. The new PSP does not exclude Byzantine history, and its courses adopt a transmedial approach, incorporating other art forms through literature, such as Byzantine iconography (with a particular focus on ekphrasis), architecture, and music. Consequently, the programme is open to a wider range of local and international candidates from various backgrounds.

By the end of the discussion session, the panel was impressed by the quality of the presentation of each member of the teaching team, which reflected the excellence of their high commitment to academic research as recognised by the national and international prizes they have won for their work.The panel was also impressed by the team's professional and personal dedication to preserving and passing on the nation's Byzantine cultural heritage through academia. The team does all this without considering the additional workload it entails.

12:00-12:30
Meeting with three administrative staff members and two teaching staff members of the PSP.
• Assist. Prof. Christos Simelidis
• Dr Anna Sklaveniti, Special Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP)
• Georgios Poulios, Head of the School's Secretariat
• Nitsa Theodosiadou, Administrative staff of the Secretariat (Graduate/ Postgraduate Studies)
• Alexandra Maligou, Administrative staff of the Secretariat
Two videos were made available: the first about the university, and the second about the

PSP. This paved the way for members of the administrative and teaching teams at the meeting to develop content on the conformity of the PSP environment through interesting discussions about concrete aspects of its infrastructure and working conditions for students. It would seem that the excellence of the teaching team is also reflected in the administrative team and all the rest.

13:00 – 13:45
Meeting with seven social partners.
The meeting had been arranged to convene eight stakeholders, but one of them, Head of a Publishing House in Athens, was unable to attend due to health reasons and offered her apologies. The other seven covered the following sectors: school management; academic inspection of secondary studies; educational consultancy; museum management; library conservation; library economics; and the conservation of patriarchal heritage in the Orthodox tradition.
The participants were convinced of the formative value of the PSP and of the concrete needs of today's society that its graduates would meet.
While the discussions in previous sessions provided tangible evidence of the merits of creating the new PSP in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Paleography, the stakeholders present at this session revealed their enthusiastic commitment, showing that the forthcoming graduates are expected to be entrusted with missions commensurate with their training by the worlds of education, research, and the conservation of Hellenic Byzantine heritage, both nationally and internationally.

14:00–14:30
Debrief Meeting
During the meeting, the panel members agreed on the high quality of the PSP and the richness and relevance of the discussions with everyone involved. The points they decided to raise at the closing meeting were:
- the discrepancy between the formal, jargon-laden, technocratic study guide and the PSP's practical, pedagogical and scientific content;
- the number of subjects (teaching units) covered per semester, and the number of hours devoted to each subject (with a view to increasing the number of subjects per semester by reducing the number of hours per unit);
- The visibility of the new PSP on the network before and after its launch.
- Increasing the international visibility of the PSP by activating opportunities for collaboration in teaching, research and innovation offered by the EPICUR European University Alliance (of which Aristotle University is a member).

14:30-15:00
Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector, the Director of the PSP, the Head of the Department, MODIP Manager
EEAP, Vice-Rector, Director of the PSP, Head of the Department, MODIP Manager
• Prof. Nikolaos Maggioros, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Planning Development, President of MODIP

• Prof. Vasileios Fyntikoglou, MODIP Committee Member
• Prof. Ioanna Karamanou, Head of the Department
• Prof. Ilias Taxidis, Director of the PSP
• Alexandra Tzaneraki, MODIP Committee Secretary
• Polyxeni Poutiou, MODIP Staff

The closing meeting took place in an atmosphere of collegial trust. Members of MODIP and teacher-researchers answered all questions in detail and provided clarifications that enlightened the panel. It became clear that the means used to make the PSP visible and attractive, such as the YouTube channel and Instagram account, are marginal in the context of the national academic tradition yet in line with today's societal practices. The new PSP will also have an attractive, informative website, which will be made available to readers as soon as it launches. The teaching team also insisted on the renewal of the spaces and infrastructures dedicated to the new PSP.
It was pointed out that the number of courses will inevitably increase with the two new members who have joined the teaching team.
Similarly, the EPICUR alliance, and in particular the University of Strasbourg, whose range of courses is similar to that of Aristotle University, will be examined more closely as an opportunity for expansion. Finally, the Vice-Rector of the University, Prof. Nikolaos Maggioros, closed the meeting by warmly inviting the members of the panel to visit the University of Thessaloniki.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

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

The PSP in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Paleography, offered by the Department of Philology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, is unique in combining these fields of study within the same programme, both nationally and internationally. It is a remodelled version of a Byzantine Philology PSP which has been rethought and reconstructed on the basis of discussions with the following people: laureates from the old formula, Summer School students, professors and other representatives of the potential market of future laureates.

The new PSP has a dual focus. Firstly, a constant preoccupation with excellence to ensure graduates enjoy successful careers has led to a policy of perfectionism in all aspects of teaching, research, infrastructure, and the study environment. The latter is particularly advantageous, thanks to the papyrology and palaeography laboratory of the Department of Philology, the Byzantine Research Centre operating within Aristotle University and the international peer-reviewed journal, Parekvolai, which organises themed study days and publishes articles in the field of Byzantine studies. The second pillar of the PSP is the long-standing tradition of linking papyrology and palaeography to the programme of medieval literary studies, following the specialisms of Antonios Sigalas, a renowned papyrologist and founding member of the Philosophical School of Aristotle University.

Although it is a three-semester programme, the PSP can be taken over four or even five semesters. The programme aims to promote scientific knowledge and develop research in medieval Greek literature, papyrology, and palaeography, with a particular focus on methodology and the production of critical editions. This combination of the three fields in question is pioneering, if not unique.

The curriculum is demanding because the texts studied are in Byzantine Greek and do not exist in translation. During the first two semesters, students attend courses or seminars on themes that are regularly updated. They also participate in activities organised by the journal's editors and other research events (colloquia) organised by their professors.

The study framework is flexible, offering students a wide range of choices. Their choice of seminars also defines the nature of their research dissertation and the profile of their specialisation. The dissertation is written during the third semester under the supervision of a specialist. It is presented to a committee of three academic staff.

The M.A. program has two specializations: Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography. Graduate students who complete the course of study in these specializations

are awarded a “Δίπλωμα μεταπτυχιακών σπουδών” (an M.A. degree) with the title “Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography with specialization in Byzantine Philology” or “Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography with specialization in Papyrology-Palaeography” accordingly.

Successful completion of the program leads to level seven (7) of the National and European Qualifications Framework in accordance with Article 47 of Law 4763/2020 (A' 254).

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.
INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.
THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE PSP OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

By decision/s of the Institutional Senate, the Institutions should adapt their strategy to allow for the provision of postgraduate study programmes, in addition to attending to the profile, vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Institution. In this strategy, the Institutions should anticipate the potential benefits, difficulties or risks from the implementation of new postgraduate study programmes and plan all the necessary actions to achieve their goals. The Institution's strategic choices should be documented through specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new postgraduate study programmes.

In the case of PSP delivered by distance methods, the Institution prepares and applies an e-learning strategy. The Institution's e-learning strategy is integrated into its overall strategy and identifies educational goals while keeping up to the rapid technological changes and to the developments in pedagogical models. The Institution should include in its strategy the justification and feasibility as to why e-learning has been selected as the appropriate learning strategy for the particular programmes of study where it is applied.

In the context of e-learning, innovation strategies, the possibility of programme revision, the linking between learning and research (requiring knowledge of the latest innovations in order to select the most appropriate means to achieve the learning outcomes) should be taken into account.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit for postgraduate study programmes should be in line with the Institution's strategy 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 postgraduate 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 continuous 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 and the availability 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 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 internal review and audit of the quality assurance system for the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Documentation

- *The Institutional strategy for postgraduate studies, which includes a special strategy for e-learning, as long as it is applied to the Institution's PSP*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the new PSP*
- *Quality Policy of the academic unit for the development and improvement of PSP*
- *Quality Targeting of the academic unit for the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The new Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography adheres to the established Quality Assurance Policy for teaching and research set by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
Quality Assurance Policy, appropriate for the PSP has been established. Specific measurable, achievable, relevant and timely quality goals regarding the PSP are planned through regulations. The monitoring of teaching methods, student satisfaction, learning outcomes and research output is planned to be conducted through regulations and surveys on a regular basis.

The courses of the new PSP in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki correspond to the second level of higher education and ensure the achievement of the competencies defined by the program.

The proposed PSP builds on a long-established academic interest within the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the fields of Byzantine Philology, Papyrology, and Paleography. The institution has previous experience in

designing and running postgraduate programmes in the field and has drawn from insights gained during academic events such as conferences, workshops and summer schools. The pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications is in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7.

The program's focus aligns with and enhances the institution's established strengths in the study of Byzantine Literature and Letters, as well as in the specialized fields of Papyrology and Paleography.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Paleography is effectively communicated and disseminated to all relevant stakeholders, including academic and administrative staff, students, and other involved parties. The policy is publicly accessible and posted on the PSP's official website, ensuring transparency, awareness, and shared commitment to quality across the academic community.

II. Analysis

The strategy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for the development of new PSP is fully aligned with the Strategic Plan of the institution. The programme's foundation in historically established fields provides a strong basis for academic continuity and institutional support. The use of internal academic resources and long-term faculty expertise enhances the credibility and depth of the offering. PSP has established a Quality Assurance Policy which includes a commitment towards continuous improvement, promoted through the academic rigor of the curriculum.

By consulting a diverse group of stakeholders, including graduates of the Department and previous PSP, participants in summer schools of Paleography and Codicology, active secondary school educators and external collaborating institutions, the institution ensured that the PSP responds to real educational and professional demands. This demonstrates feasibility and strengthens its relevance to the academic community.

Based on the studied documents and the results of the interviews, it should be noted that the University has a unified policy and requirements in matters of quality assurance, which ensures the stability of a unified internal quality assurance system.

The PSP is tuition free. The teaching staff is highly qualified and allocated to the appropriate specializations of PSP based on their experience and qualifications. In addition, there is an Academic Advisor who is responsible for handling student complaints and resolving any queries and problems.

Significant asset of the PSP is the availability of the Laboratory of Paleography and Codicology, which offers not only physical and technical resources but also access to high-quality educational material, such as the manuscript collection of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, digital manuscript reproductions, and specialized paleographical manuals. These resources provide a strong practical and research-based component to the PSP, directly supporting its academic goals and learning outcomes.
Further reinforcing the programme's academic environment is the scientific journal "Parekbole" ("Παρεκβολαί"), published by the Division of Medieval and Modern Greek Studies, along with the "Parekboleon Hemerae" ("Παρεκβολών Ημέραι") workshops organized by the teaching staff. These initiatives reflect a vibrant scholarly community and provide postgraduate students with opportunities to engage in editorial, research, and writing activities. Additionally, the presence of the Centre for Byzantine Research (Κέντρο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών) at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki offers further institutional backing. Its research networks, academic collaborations, and expertise provide postgraduate students with access to a broader intellectual environment. Overall, these components collectively indicate that the institution developed the PSP with attention to feasibility and demand and plans to implement it within a well-supported academic ecosystem.

The institution demonstrates a clear commitment to quality assurance through the systematic implementation of multiple processes aimed at monitoring and continuously improving the quality of the PSP. Furthermore, the institution systematically engages in the collection, processing, and analysis of quality-related data, which informs evidence-based decision-making. The institution also has planned to conduct annual internal evaluations of the PSP, enabling the department to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. These ongoing assessments will support the dynamic development of the PSP and ensure its sustainability, academic integrity, and alignment with strategic objectives.

The employers and social partners confirmed during interviews the existence of demand for the graduates' qualification in the labour market. There is sustained interest from both academic staff and external stakeholders in the subject areas covered by the PSP, indicating its academic relevance and the potential for long-term viability.

III. Conclusions

The integration of structured and recurring quality assurance processes confirms that the institution embeds quality management into the core of its strategic planning for postgraduate education. The new PSP fully complies with the needs and the aims of a modern specialized postgraduate study program in Byzantine

Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

● Continue to collaborate with the external partners and expand engagement with international institutions to further enhance and solidify the PSP's academic excellence and impact.

● Ensure regular feedback from students and graduates in the formal periodical revision of the PSP curriculum.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New 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 NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT AND THE STREAMS OR SPECIALISATIONS, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW 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, the specialisations, the expected learning outcomes, the structure, the courses, the teaching and assessment modes, the teaching staff and the necessary resources 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. In particular, for each expected 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 for the 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 NQF, 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: teaching assignments per subject area and per course*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) has established the new Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) in "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography" following a rigorous, multi-stage approval process. Initiated by the Department of Philology in March 2024, the proposal, including a detailed feasibility study and budget, progressed through the University's Committee on Postgraduate Studies before receiving final authorisation from the AUTH Senate in October 2024. This comprehensive process involved various university bodies, underscoring a strong commitment to quality assurance and adherence to both internal regulations and national laws.

The PSP is meticulously designed with clear academic objectives. Its primary

goals are to advance scientific knowledge and research in Byzantine Literature and Grammar, and to provide specialised training in Papyrology and Palaeography. A broader aim is to cultivate a highly skilled scientific and research workforce for both public and private sectors, while also preparing graduates for doctoral studies. The programme offers two distinct specialisations: "Byzantine Philology" (BYF) and "Papyrology-Palaeography" (PPA). Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) are explicitly defined and aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and Dublin Descriptors for Level 7, ensuring international recognition of the qualification.
Structurally, the PSP spans three semesters for each specialisation. The first two semesters are dedicated to coursework, with two courses per semester, each worth 15 ECTS credits. The third semester is exclusively for the Master's Thesis, which contributes 30 ECTS, bringing the total to 90 ECTS for programme completion. The curriculum allows for flexibility, enabling students to select at least 15 ECTS from the alternative specialisation. Instruction is primarily face-to-face and delivered in Greek, with provisions for other languages under exceptional circumstances. Strict attendance (75% minimum) and comprehensive assessment methods, including written and oral examinations and assignments, are enforced. A passing grade is 6 or higher on a 0-10 scale, and a compulsory Master's Thesis (15,000-20,000 words) is required after accumulating 45 ECTS.

The teaching staff comprises specialised faculty from the Department of Medieval Greek Studies and Classical Studies, supplemented by other Philology faculty, doctoral-holding Special Teaching Staff, visiting professors, and doctoral candidates. Notably, the PSP operates without tuition fees, leveraging the existing administrative and technical infrastructure of the Department of Philology. This includes robust secretarial support, well-equipped libraries, and specialised laboratories like the Laboratory of Palaeography & Codicology, outfitted with modern technological tools. This strategic use of existing resources optimises cost-efficiency and enhances accessibility for prospective students.
Quality assurance is central to the programme's operation. AUTH's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) is responsible for approving internal reviews and evaluations, and for submitting certification proposals to the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE). The PSP undergoes periodic internal evaluation by MODIP and requires external certification by HAHE for both initial operation and continued functionality. The programme's design is fully integrated with AUTH's Strategic Plan for 2024-2028, aligning with the university's goals of offering high-quality, competitive postgraduate programmes and adapting to evolving educational demands.

Student involvement is fostered through mandatory attendance, participation in activities, and an anonymous electronic evaluation system for courses and instructors. Each student is assigned an Academic Advisor to monitor progress

and assist with study and research. The programme explicitly considers the needs of external stakeholders, with the feasibility study confirming its response to existing market demands for specialised professionals in both public (education, libraries, museums) and private sectors (publishing, private collections). While formal internships are not mandatory, scholarship recipients may engage in "reciprocal work," providing practical experience. The integration of teaching and research is fundamental, with the curriculum informed by faculty research and the mandatory Master's Thesis serving as a significant research component. The PSP's comprehensive legal and regulatory framework, coupled with its transparency through a detailed, publicly available Student Guide, ensures accountability and credibility.

II. Analysis

The design and approval process for the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) in "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography" at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) is both robust and transparent. Its multi-tiered approval structure, involving the Department Assembly, Steering Committee, University Committee on Postgraduate Studies, and the Senate, ensures a comprehensive review from diverse academic, administrative, and strategic viewpoints. This layered approach enhances the rigour of the process, minimising oversight and ensuring all critical aspects are thoroughly vetted. The consistent referencing of national laws (e.g., Law 4957/2022) and internal university regulations throughout the Senate Decision provides a strong legal foundation, demonstrating unwavering commitment to established procedures and national compliance standards.

The PSP's design and approval unequivocally comply with Law 4957/2022, which governs postgraduate programmes in Greece. This is evident in the seamless integration of the law's provisions concerning ECTS, learning outcomes, and quality assurance into the programme's framework. The explicit role of AUTH's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) in approving reviews and evaluations, and in submitting certification proposals to the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE), coupled with the Department's commitment to "continuous improvement" and the application of AUTH's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), signifies an institutionalised culture of quality. This goes beyond mere procedural compliance, demonstrating a genuine, systemic commitment to excellence, crucial for long-term academic integrity and reputation.

The PSP's stated objectives – advancing scientific knowledge, developing research, and specialising scholars in Byzantine Literature and Papyrology-Palaeography – are clear, specific, and directly align with the principle of defined programme objectives. The precise articulation of the scientific subject, supported by the two distinct specialisations, ensures a focused and coherent academic profile. A significant strength is the explicit mapping of Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) to EQF/NQF Level 7 and the Dublin Descriptors. This alignment ensures international comparability and recognition of qualifications,

vital for student mobility and enhancing graduate employability across Europe, reflecting a thoughtful and globally-aware curriculum design.

The detailed articulation of employment prospects in both public and private sectors indicates proactive consideration of graduates' career trajectories, fulfilling the requirement for clear employment outlooks. The strategic decision to combine "Byzantine Philology" with "Papyrology-Palaeography" is a highly specialised academic choice, positioning the programme within a niche market. The feasibility study's justification that this combination addresses "increased needs" in both sectors indicates a deliberate strategy to carve out a distinct identity and competitive advantage. This focused approach ensures graduates acquire unique, highly sought-after skills, strengthening AUTH's reputation and academic leadership in these specialised scholarly domains.

Assessment methods, including written and oral examinations and assignments, are standard and appropriate. A particularly strong aspect is the explicit provision for making evaluation criteria for each ELO publicly available, significantly enhancing clarity for students. The comprehensive PSP Student Guide serves as a central repository for all programme details, and its online publication in both Greek and English ensures broad accessibility and transparency for all stakeholders. Having said that, the student guide is not particularly user friendly and should be modified to enhance its usability. The mandatory electronic evaluation of courses and instructors, conducted anonymously, establishes a direct and confidential channel for feedback. This mechanism, reinforced by Quality Objectives to encourage participation and facilitate "corrective changes," creates a robust feedback loop for continuous pedagogical enhancement.

The PSP demonstrates strong alignment with AUTH's overarching strategic plan and a deep integration of research into its teaching. The curriculum is directly informed by faculty research, and the mandatory Master's Thesis serves as a significant research component, engaging students in knowledge creation. The ECTS framework provides a clear, internationally recognised measure of student workload. Active student involvement is systematically ensured through mandatory participation, a personalised Academic Advisor system, and formal feedback mechanisms, fostering a student-centric learning environment.

While the programme's objectives clearly reflect identified labour market needs for specialised professionals, the documentation does not explicitly detail the process of direct consultation with external stakeholders during curriculum design. This is an area for potential strengthening. Regarding work experience, "reciprocal work" for scholarship students offers practical experience within the academic setting, and AUTH's broader Strategic Plan emphasises strengthening collaborations for internships. However, formal, credited internships or structured mobility opportunities are not explicitly integrated as a mandatory component for all students, representing an area for potential enhancement.

The programme's design balances academic rigour with evolving employability demands. It is fundamentally academic and research-focused, yet explicitly addresses "employment prospects" and "market needs," indicating a deliberate

strategy to bridge the gap between deep academic specialisation and practical employability. Mechanisms like "reciprocal work" and the institutional focus on internships suggest an evolving strategy to ensure specialised training translates into tangible career opportunities. MODIP's central role in verifying compliance and approving certification proposals is critical, adding an independent internal quality review layer. The explicit commitment to periodic internal evaluation by MODIP and external certification by HAHE demonstrates a robust, long-term commitment to quality assurance, ensuring ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement. The direct link between the university's performance on HAHE quality indicators and state funding creates a powerful strategic incentive for rigorous compliance and continuous improvement, making the PSP's adherence to quality principles a strategic imperative impacting AUTH's financial stability and standing.

III. Conclusions

The new Postgraduate Study Programme in "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography" at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki demonstrates full compliance with Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes. The program's design and approval process are well-defined, transparent, and align with both national regulatory frameworks and the institution's strategic quality objectives. The comprehensive documentation provides clear evidence of a meticulously planned and approved program.

The PSP exhibits several notable strengths in its design and approval. A robust and multi-layered approval process, involving the Department Assembly, the Steering Committee, the University Committee on Postgraduate Studies, and the Senate, coupled with the explicit verification role of MODIP, ensures a thorough and well-documented approval process that strictly adheres to regulatory frameworks. The program's design is clear and well-aligned, with objectives, scientific subject, and specializations clearly articulated and directly linked to expected learning outcomes. These outcomes are rigorously mapped to EQF/NQF Level 7 and Dublin Descriptors, ensuring international comparability. Furthermore, the program demonstrates comprehensive information disclosure through its detailed PSP Student Guide, which is committed to online publication in multiple languages, fostering transparency and providing accessible information to all stakeholders. A strong research-teaching nexus is evident, as the curriculum is directly related to faculty research interests, and the mandatory Master's Thesis ensures a deep and continuous integration of teaching and research. Finally, the program exhibits strategic market responsiveness, with its highly specialized nature serving as a direct response to identified and existing needs in the national and international labor markets for specific academic expertise, aiming to enhance graduate employability in niche fields.

While fully compliant, two areas for potential enhancement have been identified. Firstly, while the program identifies labor market needs, the documentation could more explicitly detail the mechanisms or processes by which external stakeholders were directly consulted and involved during the design phase of the curriculum. This would further demonstrate a proactive, collaborative approach to curriculum development. Secondly, although "reciprocal work" for scholarship students and broader institutional efforts towards internships are noted, the PSP could benefit from further formalizing and integrating explicit, credited internships or structured mobility opportunities as a direct, mandatory, or highly encouraged component of its curriculum for all students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Formalize External Stakeholder Consultation: Implement a structured and documented mechanism for regular consultation with external stakeholders, such as representatives from relevant libraries, museums, publishing houses, and research centers. This consultation should occur specifically during future curriculum review and revision cycles to ensure ongoing relevance and alignment with evolving professional needs.

Integrate Formal Internship/Mobility Pathways: Explore and formalize opportunities for credited internships or structured mobility programs within the curriculum. This could involve establishing formal partnerships with relevant institutions or organizations to provide all students with direct, structured work experience opportunities, thereby enhancing their practical skills and employability.

Document Feedback Implementation: While student feedback mechanisms are commendably in place, it is recommended to explicitly document how this feedback leads to

concrete curriculum adjustments or pedagogical improvements. This would enhance the transparency of the continuous improvement cycle and clearly demonstrate the direct impact of student input on program quality.

Principle 3: Regulations for 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).

The Institution should develop and publish the internal regulations prescribed by law which, among other things, should regulate all issues of postgraduate studies from the beginning to the end of the studies.

Indicatively:

- *The students' 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*

In case that the PSP is offered through distance learning methods, the Institution should have in place a regulation for e-learning, including in particular the following issues:

- *Services of the Institution to support e-learning*
- *Methodology for the development and implementation of courses*
- *Ways of providing teaching and variety of teaching and assessment modes*
- *General standard of course structure*
- *Student support system*
- *Support of faculty/teachers with mandatory e-learning training for new staff members*
- *Technological infrastructures made available by the Institution*
- *Student identity confirmation system (student identity check, assignment and exam writing process, security and certification issues).*
- *The Institution should establish rules for the provision of appropriate access and for the assurance of the participation of students affected by disability, illness, and other special circumstances.*
- *Ethical issues, such as those concerning data protection, intellectual property rights and rules for protection against fraud are governed by the e-learning regulation.*

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

Documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the postgraduate study programme*
- *Special regulation for the implementation of e-learning if the PSP is delivered through distance methods*
- *Research Ethics Regulation*

- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Degree certificate template and Diploma Supplement template*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

During the meeting, all of the participants (faculty, administrative staff and stakeholders) presented a structured overview of the targeted goals. They introduced us to their expectations of the students, the available opportunities for them and finally the impact of the program to the professional development of alumni.

II. Analysis

The students of the department, through the Regulations of Studies, have access to the necessary information about the duration of studies, the number of the courses and their academic obligations in total. The teaching staff and the academic advisor are willing to help students to fulfil their needs and to inform them of the opportunities which the department offers, such as traineeships and mobility options. The courses are taught through a combination of spoken sessions, interactive exercises and multimedia presentations. In addition, there is the possibility of a scholarship, based on academic criteria. Some of these may be compensatory, i.e. accompanied by an obligation to provide work for research, teaching or administrative needs. All these arrangements create a supportive environment for students.

The monitoring of student progress is continuous throughout the semester. ECTS and workload are equally distributed and in a reasonable way. Students during the semesters are required to complete short assignments and are required to apply papyrus reading and descriptive and critical annotation techniques. The final examination will be a major written paper which will be publicly presented. In special cases, provision is made for the examination to be held at a distance.

Furthermore, the possibility of mobility abroad is foreseen through the Erasmus+ programme. All the information needed is available at https://eurep.auth.gr/el/students/traineeship. Moreover, the professors expressed their desire to take advantage of the internal mobility programme, which allows students to take part in universities in Greece.

The postgraduate diploma is awarded after the successful writing and defense of the MA thesis. All the necessary information regarding the scope, the student's obligations, the duties of the supervisor, the settlement of common issues that arise (e.g. study leave of the lecturer) are detailed in the programme of study. The diploma is issued in both Greek and English. Although the curriculum is newly established, students can view previous dissertations of related

departments of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki through the repository of the faculty https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/?ln=en .

The teaching staff mentioned the Laboratory of Paleography and Codicology (PalCod) as a place for students to receive practical training. Teaching is carried out there by faculty members of the Department of Philology and collaborating members of other universities. The presence of students is compulsory and students acquire practical knowledge of paleography. In the Laboratory of Epigraphy and Papyrology (EREP) they learn about the objects of epigraphy and papyrology, in which they are taught the ways of exploitation, conservation and dissemination of inscriptions and papyri. Also through the Centre for Byzantine Research students can participate in workshops on a wide range of subjects related to literature, history and archaeology. Through these, students gain practical knowledge of how to use materials and they actively participate in academic life.

III. Conclusions

The programme is fully compliant with HAHE criteria as to the principle number 3: Regulations for student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies, and certification.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

An introductory course on the methods of writing a thesis and on the use of the department's repositories would be helpful.

The names of laboratory support staff could be displayed prominently, alongside details of the services they provide.

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New 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 and scientific competence of the teaching staff at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the proper staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training, 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, policy for attracting highly qualified staff, and PSP Obligation Regulation*
- *List of the intended for recruitment teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin, Department of origin and relevant individual achievements*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology- Paleography" belongs to the Department of Philology, a part of the School of Philosophy of the Aristotel University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). It is the only Program worldwide which combines these two specializations: Byzantine Philology and Byzantine Papyrology- Paleography.

The Program has a Teaching Staff of 7 members of DEP (faculty members/ Μέλος ΔΕΠ): 4 Full and 3 Assistant Professors (4 male and 3 female). In addition, it has two Laboratory Teaching staff. Full information about each of them is available on the relevant part of PSP's website: https://websites.auth.gr/pmsbyznew/prosopiko/. Six from the PSP's teaching staff belong to the field of Medieval Greek Philology and one to the Classics of the same University (for Papyrology studies).

The Department of Philology adopts and follows clear and transparent procedures for the selection of suitably qualified personnel. It provides employment conditions that respect the importance of teaching and research, as defined by the relevant legislation. The assignment of the teaching work of the Postgraduate Program is carried out by decision of the competent body (Department Assembly/ Συνέλευση Τμήματος or Curriculum Committee/ Επιτροπή Προγράμματος Σπουδών), following a recommendation from the Postgraduate Program Coordinating Committee (Συντονιστική Επιτροπή), or from the Postgraduate Program Director. In the framework of transparency that the Department operates, it has posted on its website the criteria/qualifications for the election and advancement of faculty members (https://www.auth.gr/diadikasia-eklogis-ekseliksis-monimopoihsis-melwn-dep/).

The 2 members of the PSPs staff have established an open access electronic journal “Parekbolai” (https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/parekbolai). It has more than 900 registered Greek and foreign members. Up to now 15 volumes have been published. The same team organizes “Parekbolai” Symposiums as well. In December 2025, the 7th Symposium on Byzantine Literature and Philology will be held as a part of the Anniversary of “100 Years of Medieval Greek Studies at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki” (1925 – 2025).

In the PSP functions the Laboratory of Papyrology and Codicology (PalCod Laboratory). Its research and teaching objects is history and development of Greek writing from the 2nd/3rd century to the 18th century, study of forms of the book and the writing material (cylinder-codex, parchment-paper), the cataloguing of collections of Greek manuscripts, the management and digitization of the microfilm collection of Greek manuscripts that it possesses (https://websites.auth.gr/palcod).

Every year the teaching staff organizes Seminars (Colloquia) with foreign and Greek scientists, members of the Department and young PhDs and postdoctoral researchers, within the framework of the Postgraduate Studies Program and in collaboration with the Laboratory of Papirology and Codology and the Department of Medieval Greek Philology of the Center for Byzantine Studies of Thessaloniki.

The members of the teaching staff annually organize the Summer School for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

It is worth mentioning that 4 of the PSPs professors have been honored with the highest Greek academic award: in 2005, 2007, 2017 (Award of the Academy of Athens) and in 2007 - for the best PhD Dissertation in Great Britain (awarded by the Hellenic Foundation). Currently, 5 of them are involved in Research Programs by ELIDEK (ΕΛΙΔΕΚ/ Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation,

www.elidek.gr).

The staff is encouraged to participate in the Erasmus+ Mobility Programs, which enables them to make short-term visits to the Universities with which the AUTH collaborates.

The PSP "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Paleography" includes 4 courses. per course consists of 15 ECTS, two courses in two semesters and the diplomatic thesis in the third semester with 30 ECTS. Students can choose either 4 compulsory courses, or 3 compulsory + 1 elective course.
The teaching work of the PSP is divided into:
√ Lectures/Seminars
√ Preparation of assignments and support of students in their carrying out of them.
√ Correction of assignments and personalized feedback to each student.

The evaluation of the teaching staff by students will be done by filling out a questionnaire, on line; the electronic system fully ensures the anonymity of participants. Questions' main axes are to evaluate teacher's skills and the quality of the course.

II. Analysis

The panel analysed all the documents submitted, including the presentations given during interviews, and considered the discussions held with staff regarding the recruitment process, workload and the systems in place to support the scientific work of academic personnel. It also took into consideration discussion with employers, and other stakeholders regarding the link between teaching and research.

The AUTH provides staff with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. It follows clear, transparent, and fair processes in recruitment according to Greek legislation. The University takes all necessary steps to fill new positions with highly qualified staff in order to meet the teaching and research needs of the program.

The University provides good infrastructure and sufficient technological support to the teaching staff.

III. Conclusions

The panel members confirmed, through their review of the relative documents, that the AUTH has adopted all the relevant rules and has taken all measures to monitor the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit teaching at the

Program, the appropriate staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training, and staff development policy.

Every member of the PSP's teaching staff has high specialization in the individual scientific fields, as well as excellent teaching and published research work in authoritative scientific journals.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Information should be provided on how to choose a supervisor, how to assign the thesis, how many MA candidates each professor can supervise, and the process for choosing an MA thesis topic.

Since one of the learning objectives of the MA thesis is to ensure students can handle all the tools that will support their original thinking correctly and comfortably, it may be advisable to offer an academic writing course, with or without ECTS credits.

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THEY SHOULD -ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING 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 and foreign students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered 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 tuition-free funded by donations, sponsorships, EU projects, and state allocations. Its financial management is overseen by AUTH's Special Account for Research Funds (E.L.K.E.). Key operational needs include library acquisitions, equipment upkeep, staff travel, workshops, visiting professors, and student scholarships. The programme leverages existing Department of Philology staff and infrastructure, minimising new costs. AUTH's strategy links 30% of state funding to quality, encouraging efficient resource use.

Infrastructure and Resources

The PSP uses the Department of Philology's administrative and technical infrastructure, including three specialised study rooms/libraries: Classical Philology (approx. 35,000 volumes), Medieval and Modern Greek Philology (approx. 40,000 volumes, computerised catalogue), and Linguistics (approx. 17,000 volumes). The department also has Microfilm, Photography, and Modern Greek Literature Archives.

For IT, the PSP utilises the Palaeography and Codicology, Philology and New Technologies, and Epigraphy and Papyrology Laboratories, all well-equipped. AUTH's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan includes comprehensive digital transformation.

Student Support and Welfare

Every postgraduate student is assigned an Academic Advisor for progress monitoring and thesis guidance. The Department of Philology provides dedicated secretarial support. The Department's Library offers user seminars.

University-wide services, detailed in the PSP Study Guide, include a Social Policy and Health Committee, Counselling and Psychological Support Centre (KESYPSY), a Student Advocate, and a University Student Club offering catering and recreation. Accommodation is available at the Student Dormitories of Thessaloniki (FETH). Career planning is supported by the Career Services Office for Studies and Career, with specialised assistance for vulnerable groups and students with disabilities provided by the Office for Supporting Students from Vulnerable Social Groups and the Unit for Equal Access, respectively.

The PSP ensures direct access to resources, offering a comprehensive online Study Guide in Greek and English. Library study rooms have clear operating hours and lending policies. Part-time study is available for employed students or those with personal circumstances. The Department accommodates graduate students with disabilities, aligning with AUTH's accessibility plan. Communication is enhanced through institutional accounts and mobile apps, and student evaluation participation is encouraged.

Quality Assurance

The PSP's learning resources and student support are subject to a robust internal quality assurance system. AUTH's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) conducts periodic internal evaluations. The Department of Philology's Quality Policy is committed to "continuous improvement." Students anonymously evaluate courses and instructors electronically. The Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) monitors participation, analyses results, and informs administrative bodies, who must review findings and take corrective actions.

Department of Philology administrative and technical staff are considered "sufficient" for the PSP. However, AUTH's broader Strategic Plan notes a general university-wide weakness in staffing levels, particularly fewer specialised scientific support and administrative staff compared to national averages for

Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Despite this, the plan outlines actions to address these through continuous training and optimised human resource utilisation.

II. Analysis

The PSP's tuition-free model significantly boosts accessibility, supported by diverse funding. Leveraging existing infrastructure is cost-effective, and the link between AUTH's quality indicators and state funding incentivises investment in resources and services.

The Department of Philology's specialised libraries, archives, and laboratories, with their extensive, modern collections and digital access, provide high-quality, relevant learning resources. AUTH's digital transformation promises further IT enhancements.

The PSP's multi-layered student support, including personalised academic advising and comprehensive university-wide services (psychological counselling, health, career guidance), promotes a holistic welfare approach. Provisions for part-time study and disability accommodations demonstrate a commendable commitment to inclusivity.

Robust internal quality assurance, with MODIP's oversight and mandatory anonymous student evaluations, is a critical strength, ensuring continuous monitoring and enhancement of resources and support.

While current administrative and technical staff are deemed sufficient, the university's acknowledged understaffing in specialised support roles could pose long-term challenges, potentially impacting service efficiency if not addressed proactively.

III. Conclusions

In conclusion, the PSP in "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography" at AUTH largely complies with quality standards for Learning Resources and Student Support, fostering a conducive learning environment through a robust institutional framework.

Key Strengths:
Exceptional Learning Resources: Highly specialised, well-equipped libraries, archives, and laboratories.
Comprehensive Student Support System: Personalised academic advising, dedicated secretarial support, and extensive university-wide services.
Financial Accessibility and Sustainability: Tuition-free model, diverse funding, and

efficient infrastructure use.
Commitment to Inclusivity: Provisions for part-time study and disability accommodations.
Transparent Information and Feedback Mechanisms: Comprehensive Study Guide and robust internal quality assurance with anonymous student evaluations.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Address Support Staffing Levels: Long-term impact of university-wide understaffing in specialised support and administrative roles on student services needs proactive management.
Proactive Engagement with Services: Ensuring all students, especially international and employed students, are actively encouraged to utilise available resources and services.

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, FOR THE AUDIT, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE NEW POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES, THUS ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PRESENT STANDARDS. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The internal evaluation of the new PSP includes the assessment of the accreditation proposal, as well as the documentation in accordance with the Principles of the present Standards and the quality procedures of the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). The internal evaluation of new postgraduate study programmes also aims at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The Institution, through its Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the corresponding academic units, organise and support the external evaluation procedures of the new PSP, according to the specific guidelines and directions provided by HAHE.

The above comprise the assessment of:

- *the objectives, content, and structure of the curriculum, the knowledge offered and the level of science and technology in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date, according to the relevant documentation listed in the decisions of the pertinent bodies*
- *the entailed students' workload for the progression and completion of postgraduate studies*
- *the satisfaction of the students' expectations and needs in relation to the programme*
- *the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

Postgraduate study programmes are designed and established in accordance with the provisions of the Institution's internal regulations, involving students and other stakeholders.

Documentation

- *The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) procedure for verifying whether the requirements of the Standards for Quality Accreditation of New PSP are met, as well as the procedure for organising and supporting their external evaluation procedures*
- *Assessment and feedback mechanisms of the PSP strategy and quality targeting, and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The internal and external evaluation process of the new Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) in "Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography", established by the Department of Philology of the Aristotle University of

Thessaloniki (AUTH), is based on seven points, four of which relate to the period preceding or parallel to the implementation of the project, and the last three to the period to come. These are

1. Study and compliance with the HAHE quality standards.
2. Evaluation by MODIP before setting up.
3. Evaluation of courses and teachers by students.
4. Evaluation of studies by graduates.
5. Evaluation by alumni
6. Continuous monitoring of quality indicators, involving multiple feedback, responses and participation of the external advisory committee.
7 Annual review meeting of all PSP contributors, with participation from the advisory committee.

II. Analysis

The quality control process in the new PSP in Byzantine Philology and Papyrology-Palaeography is designed so that the evaluation and monitoring system feeds mainly on its own production. This concept is symbolised by the ouroboros, a mythological snake that bites its own tail to feed on its flesh. Such a system can only work if the 'flesh' of the snake is substantial, i.e. if the training is of sufficiently high quality to allow the production process to continue; otherwise, the whole system is in danger of collapsing.

Given the foundation on which it rests — the teaching team, whose work has been awarded honorary prizes by the academic community for excellence at national and international levels, coupled with the explicit role of AUTH's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) in approving reviews and evaluations, and in submitting certification proposals to the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) — it seems utopian that the quality of the PSP should not be assured. In addition, the advisory committee, which will probably comprise stakeholders such as those whom the panel members met on Tuesday, 15 July, will help ensure the programme's quality is maintained and enhanced. This is all the more so given that the alumni, whose connection to this training is not only professional but also identity-related, will ensure that their participation in maintaining the quality of the PSP contributes to its growth.

In short, the quality maintenance monitoring system presented here combines a conventional rational evaluation system with personal and sentimental factors. This can not only ensure that training quality is maintained, but also exceed the expectations of those involved.

III. Conclusions

The MODIP team and the programme's teaching staff have ensured that the

PSP's quality assurance system meets the required standards and can be maintained in the long term, while improving the quality of learning.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

It is recommended that a council specific to each intake/cohort be established and convened at the end of each semester. This council would comprise a student representative, the teaching team and administrative staff responsible for examinations and study monitoring at the PSP. The purpose of the council would be to discuss the programme's running.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The programme has no tuition fees.
There is a strong link between teaching and research.
Practical training (though not in a paid apprenticeship setting) is provided in the state of the art laboratories of the Department.
Teaching staff are enthusiastic about the programme and are highly qualified in the relevant area.
The PSP runs its own in-house peer reviewed journal that gives PSP students the opportunity to publish their first scientific article in their field.
Topics are approached from diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks and individual teaching styles.
Regular colloquia are organised with local and international specialists to involve PSP students in research practices and habits.
Strong connections with External stakeholders, who have expressed their intention to contribute significantly to the implementation of the strategic goals and processes of the PSP.

II. Areas of Weakness

Courses bear a large credit load (15 ECTS each) which removes flexibility and limits the learning opportunities for students. Spreading the credit load (for example, to courses carrying 10 ECTS each) would provide enhanced learning opportunities in that students will be able to take more courses in more topics and will introduce some more planning flexibility in case staff become unavailable due to research leave or other factors.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Collaboration with external partners and engagement with international institutions. While a good relationship with external partners is in place, widening the range of partnerships will further enhance and solidify the PSP's academic excellence and impact. We recommend that this be achieved through the formalization and implementation of a structured and documented mechanism for regular consultation with external stakeholders, such as representatives from relevant libraries, museums, publishing houses, and research centers. This consultation should occur specifically during future curriculum review and revision cycles to ensure ongoing relevance and alignment with evolving professional needs.

Integrate Formal Internship/Mobility Pathways: Explore and formalize opportunities for credited internships or structured mobility programs within the curriculum. This could involve establishing formal partnerships with relevant institutions or organizations to provide all students with direct, structured work experience opportunities, thereby enhancing their practical skills and employability.

Ensure regular feedback from students and graduates and document feedback implementation in the formal periodical revision of the PSP curriculum. While student feedback mechanisms are commendably in place, it is recommended to explicitly document how this feedback leads to concrete curriculum adjustments or pedagogical improvements. This would enhance the transparency of the continuous improvement cycle and clearly demonstrate the direct impact of student input on program quality.
Establish an introductory course on the methods of writing a thesis and on the use of the department's repositories.

Information on support staff: The names of the supporting staff of the laboratories could be placed in a prominent place indicating the type of service they are going to provide.
Provide clearer information on the availability of faculty for thesis supervision.

Address Support Staffing Levels: Long-term impact of university-wide understaffing in specialised support and administrative roles on student services needs proactive management.

Proactive Engagement with Services: Ensuring all students, especially international and employed students, are actively encouraged to utilise available resources and services.

Establish clear grade descriptors - develop and publish criteria for each grade level to ensure transparent and consistent assessment across coursework and the MA thesis.

In order to make the Student Guide more user-friendly, it is proposed that it be stripped of formal details such as codes relating to European legislation, ministerial decisions and decrees, and ΦΕΚ.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:
All
The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:
None
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
VERNADAKIS EMMANUEL	Signed by VERNADAKIS EMMANUEL - 24/07/2025 16:08:17 +03:00
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