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Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Aerial Autonomous Systems

Department: Electrical and Computer Engineering

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 26/06/2025

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 Aerial Autonomous Systems 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 Aerial Autonomous Systems 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. BOTSIS IOANNIS (Chair)
(Title, Name, Surname)
École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)
(Institution of origin)

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

3. G. SELIMIS DIMITRIOS
(Title, Name, Surname)
University of the Peloponnese
(Institution of origin)

4. KONTIS KONSTANTINOS
(Title, Name, Surname)
School of Engineering, University of Glasgow
(Institution of origin)

5. SALONITIS KONSTANTINOS
(Title, Name, Surname)
Cranfield University
(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.

This Panel (EEAP), assembled by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE), was tasked with assessing the compliance of the Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) named ''Aerial Autonomous Systems'' from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The EEAP has drafted the present accreditation report in accordance with the HAHE Quality Assurance requirements (laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020). The PSP assessment was conducted through document reviews and online interviews with directors, academic staff and external stakeholders. The method used was an evidence-based process centred on the provided documents, discussions with academic and administrative staff as well as employers and social partners. It aimed to evaluate the fulfilment of the HAHE requirements of the relevant PSP quality assurance standards and comment on their compliance, effectiveness, and applicability. The evaluation was conducted remotely using Zoom, provided by HAHE, for the private meetings with the EEAP members and another zoom, provided the institution, for the meetings with the members of the institution and external stakeholders.
The schedule and agenda of the meetings were as follows:
Tuesday, June 10, 2025: Private meeting of the EEAP members.
Wednesday, June 11, 2025: Consecutive meetings with the following agenda

1. Meeting with the MODIP Representative, the Head of the Department, the Director of the PSP, MODIP Supervisor: Welcome and short overview of the postgraduate programme: academic profile, status, strengths and possible areas of concern. Discuss the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation.
2. Meeting with the teaching staff: Discussion on professional development, mobility, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, workload, evaluation by students; link between teaching and research; teaching staff involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the programme; possible areas of weakness.
3. On-line tour of classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities related to the PSP. Discussion on the presented material: Evaluate facilities and learning resources to ascertain that the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate for the successful provision of the programme.
4. Meeting with employers and social partners: Discuss relations of the programme with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.
5. Private debriefing (Panel members only): Discuss on the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepare the oral report.
6. Closure meeting with the MODIP Representative, the Director of the PSP, the Head of the Department, MODIP Supervisor/Deputy Supervisor Informal presentation of the EEAP key findings. Discuss potential points that might need further clarification.

On this and the following days, the EEAP received additional information from MODIP and the secretariat of the leading Department, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and

evaluated the content to complete the draft of the accreditation report. The participating faculty and staff were eager and helpful in providing all information requested by the Panel.

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 Departments of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Agricultural and Surveying Engineering of the Faculty of Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) have organized and plan to operate, from the academic year 2025-2026, an Interdepartmental Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) named “Aerial Autonomous Systems” offered only in English in accordance with the provisions of this decision and the provisions of Law no. 4957/2022.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is designated as the leading Department.

The PSP promotes and elaborates basic concepts, principles and technologies in engineering with advanced methods of analysis, design, optimization and control of aerial autonomous systems (unmanned vehicles). This is achieved by combining various areas of engineering sciences with particular emphasis in innovative wide-ranging applications that include, among others, agricultural and topographic observations, forest surveillance, prevention and assistance in natural disasters, Civil Protection, as well as the transport of goods.

The purpose of the PSP is to equip students with advanced interdisciplinary skills required for the design, performance optimization, and evaluation of the technical and economic viability of unmanned vehicle systems.

The expected learning outcomes of the Programme’s graduates are:
- The acquisition of knowledge and development of skills to carry out research in the scientific and technological areas of autonomous systems.
- The acquisition of skills and know-how necessary to adapt and prosper in a demanding and rapidly changing research area and work environment.

In addition, the programme aims at:
- Promoting methodologies for research and teaching in the broad field of design, control, telecommunications, operations, innovative methods of mapping and positioning using a combination of modern technologies.
- Preparing its students for doctoral level studies.

The MSc has no specializations and awards a Diploma of Postgraduate Studies (MSc) entitled “Aerial Autonomous Systems”.

The MSc is structured in 3 semesters of 13 weeks each. In the first semester, 6 courses are taught, all of them compulsory, while in the second semester 6 courses are selected from a

total number of 10 offered courses. In the third semester, the Master's Thesis is completed. The programme requires 90 ECTS.

Attendance at the MSc is compulsory and the maximum time allowed for the completion of studies is 5 semesters.

The number of admissions per year is set at a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 35 postgraduate students.

The MSc plans to run until the academic year 2028-2029, with the possibility of extension, subject to its non-accreditation during the periodic evaluation of the Department.

Institutional and Departmental Profiles

University: The AUTH is located in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, and is the largest public university in the country by student populations with 11 faculties with 41 schools and 289 laboratories. The institution is active in several areas related to the environment, computing, new technologies and nanotechnology, telecommunications, industrial technologies, transport, biotechnology, biomedicine and health, agriculture, forestry and fishery, education and language, history and archaeology, social studies and economics.

Department: The faculty of engineering is one of the 11 faculties with seven 7 Departments amongst which the three participating ones in the PSP are:

- Electrical and Computer Engineering, leading department
- Mechanical Engineering
- Agricultural and Surveying Engineering

These Departments have adequate laboratory and digital infrastructure, have contributed significantly to teaching, applied and basic research nationally and internationally and provide strong academic bases for collaboration and innovation.

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

I. Findings

The MSc "Aerial Autonomous Systems" (ΔΠΜΣ «Εναέρια Αυτόνομα Συστήματα») is fully integrated into the strategic development plan of the collaborating Departments at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). This is substantiated by:

- An articulated institutional strategy for postgraduate studies and its alignment with AUTH's overarching strategic goals.
- A formal Senate decision for the programme's establishment, following the legislative framework.
- A comprehensive Feasibility and Sustainability Study assessing infrastructure, demand, resources, and alignment with market trends.
- A detailed Quality Assurance Policy mirroring both the national QA standards and the internal policy of AUTH. It includes mechanisms for evaluating teaching, learning outcomes, resource allocation, and graduate employability.
- A defined and publicly declared Quality Goal Setting document with measurable indicators, responsible actors, actions, and timelines.
- Active involvement of external stakeholders, including references to labour

market needs, industrial relevance, and international benchmarking.

II. Analysis

The academic unit demonstrates strategic foresight by aligning the MSc with both national education objectives and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Evidence of robust strategic and quality management includes:

- Proactive identification of opportunities and risks in launching the programme, with specific mitigation strategies laid out in the feasibility reports.
- The Quality Assurance Policy is operationalised across academic, administrative, and financial dimensions, including annual reviews by the Quality Assurance Unit (ΜΟΔΙΠ).
- Explicit mechanisms for continuous improvement, including student feedback integration, staff development, and review of curriculum relevance.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration among the 3 participating AUTH Departments, reinforcing sustainability and resource optimisation.
- The absence of an e-learning component renders the e-learning strategy requirement inapplicable for this programme, simplifying the strategic implementation phase.

III. Conclusions

The strategy, policy, and quality goal setting for the MSc "Aerial Autonomous Systems" meet the expectations set out in Principle 1. The academic unit demonstrates a comprehensive, data-driven, and stakeholder-informed approach to strategic development, underpinned by institutional support and a clear quality culture.

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

R.1.1 Explore the planning of a digital strategy in anticipation of potential future hybrid or online delivery modes.

R.1.2 Formalise stakeholder advisory input through annual reports or structured industry engagement forums.

R.1.3 Enhance visibility of the quality assurance process by publishing student success metrics and graduate outcomes on the programme's website.
R.1.4 As part of the wider efforts for continuous improvement, the department can consider enhancing and optimising the content of the programme curriculum to better reflect the title of the PSP "Aerial Autonomous Systems" or else changing its title to "Unmanned Aerial Systems".

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 development of the Study Programme has been guided by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) relevant policies, following a clear and well-defined procedure, in accordance with the national legislation. The planned courses will be offered by teaching staff who are experts in their respective areas, incorporating important research and industry-targeted elements.

There seem to be good links with industry who are keen to host PSP diploma projects in their companies, while the staff is keen to promote a culture of engagement with research by involving interested students in research projects, seminars or design activities in collaboration with relevant industries and stakeholders.

The PSP is well-designed, in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 7, thereby ensuring advanced academic and professional knowledge, skills and competences provided. The anticipated student workload also seems to be in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for Level 7. The AUTH Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), which oversees the internal and external evaluation processes, has provided an effective guidance in the preparation and documentation of the new PSP, resulting to a concise set of high-quality practical documents (A08-12), in Greek and English language.

II. Analysis

The PSP is well designed. It is well documented and provides valid arguments regarding the demand for the skills and competences of its future alumni. There is also a brief overview of similar programmes in Greece and abroad.

The PSP under accreditation focuses on the design and use of systems based on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). Although the civilian use of UAV based systems

is rapidly expanding (mainly in surveying, cartography and civil protection applications), it is the military use of the AUVs that is the main driver for the demand for such systems and competences, as demonstrated dramatically by the on-going war in Ukraine. This is reflected also in the PSP under accreditation, the main stakeholders of which are military institutions and industries. Unfortunately, the political reality in Greece, and particularly the Universities, do not favour defence related research.

The Panel has three concerns on this otherwise well-designed PSP:

1. The PSP title is not consistent nor with its stated objectives or with its course content. More specifically, the PSP essentially deals with “Unmanned” Aerial Vehicle (UAV) systems and not with “Autonomous” Aerial Systems (AAV) as per its title. In fact, the use of the term “autonomous” in the PSP title is misleading: there is no course dedicated (in fact not even related) to the concept of “autonomy”.
2. The course duration is minimal (just one year plus the thesis) for such a broad subject that encompasses aspects such as materials, design, flight dynamics, electronics, telecoms, sensors etc. This is even more important given the diversity of the incoming students. It is advised that, in the coming few years, the PSP increases its duration by at least one semester and considers offering to its incoming students a selection of on-going undergraduate courses tailored to each student individual curriculum.
3. The PSP subject matter is very broad. In addition to the existing selection of elective courses, it might be a good idea to consider offering three or more specializations (streams), like a design/structural, a flight control and an electronics / telecoms stream.

III. Conclusions

The Panel is of the opinion that the PSP fully adheres to all HAHE Principle 2 formal requirements. However, it is of paramount importance that all 3 points, as listed above and mapped to the recommendations below, are tackled during the next few years, perhaps further enriched from the experience during the first PSP operational years.

Panel Judgement

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

Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R2.1 Realign the PSP title with its stated goals and content by either changing the title to “unmanned” rather than “autonomous” systems or by introducing suitable course content on autonomy.

R2.2 Examine the possibility to prolong the PSP duration at least by 1 semester, maybe by offering on-going undergraduate specialized courses according to the individual curricula of the incoming students.

R2.3 Examine the possibility to introduce specialisations / streams.

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

The student selection process is outlined in the documents A11 “Postgraduate studies regulation of operation” and A12 “Regulations of studies, practice internship, mobility, preparation of assignments of DPMS” of the PSP programme proposal folder. The positions are advertised in the programmes and the participating School’s website.

Applicants can submit their application online or in paper format at the Secretariat of the MSc. The selection criteria for candidates include: (1) The overall grade of the undergraduate degree/diploma, (2) The candidate's performance in a diploma or degree thesis, (3) Any existing professional or research activity relevant to the scientific subjects of the MSc, (4) Possession of other degrees or postgraduate qualifications relevant to the scientific subjects of the MSc, (5) Publications in scientific journals and conference proceedings and finally (6) Knowledge of the English language, as a prerequisite, at least level B2, according to the system of the Council of Europe, which is accepted by the A.S.E.P. Alternatively, a degree or postgraduate diploma of a Greek Institution or a similar Institution abroad, showing the successful completion of an English-speaking undergraduate or postgraduate program, may be submitted.

The selection process of the candidates, by decision of the Program of Studies Committee, is carried out by a three-member Selection and Examination Committee, consisting of Teaching and Research Staff of the faculty who have undertaken postgraduate work.

The Programme committee has set an ambitious target for the number of students to be admitted at the programme: a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 35 postgraduate students.

All the programme information is available in the programme’s website, the “Study Guide” (Document A8), the “Postgraduate studies regulation of operation” (Document A11) and the “Regulations of studies, practice internship, mobility, preparation of assignments of DPMS” (Document A12). Additional sources of information include the student advisor, the director, the programme, the Department's secretariat, the teachers, the e-class, and emails.

Studying part-time is possible, with the expectation that studies will not last more than twice the normal duration of a full-time study.

Performance in courses can be assessed through assignments, presentations, written or oral examinations, or a combination of these methods. The respective instructor or course coordinator communicates the terms and criteria for assessment in each course to the students at the beginning of the course. The

quality requirements and criteria of the PSP thesis are in place.

II. Analysis

The programme benefits from the experience in the areas associated with the new PSP of the academic and administrative staff at the Aristotle University. Good documentation accurately describes the required procedures for participation in the PSP, the students' rights and obligations, the assessment requirements, and the completion of the thesis. The procedures associated with student complaints are sufficient.

The presented rules and regulations, considering admission, progression, recognition, thesis drafting, participation in European and International student mobility programmes and conferences, as well as degree award to students, are adequate.

III. Conclusions

The rules and regulations developed for this PSP guiding admission, progression, recognition, thesis preparation, and degree award to students are considered adequate. Overall, the programme fully complies with the requirements of Principle 3.

The PSP should actively encourage and support student internship with national industry and state agencies.

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

R3.1 Develop, encourage and support a student internship programme.

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 programme will be delivered by established academics from 3 Departments at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). They are recruited and their performance and professional progression through the academic ranks is controlled according to the laws and regulations of the Ministry of Education of the Hellenic Republic and the University's internal regulations.

The PSP did not provide any detailed CVs of its teaching staff, but brief notes were given in Document A5 on sustainability. All staff are well established academics with proven teaching and research records and are well esteemed in the academic community. Most of them have extensive experience in delivering graduate and postgraduate courses within the Departments over several years.

The University has a well-established system for supporting the continuous development of its academics in staying at the university forefront of their field

of knowledge and expertise. Moreover, the PSP intends establishing an advisory board composed by top professionals related to the argument of the particular PSP. Some of these professionals, most of them related to defence institutions / industry, were presented at the meeting with employers and social partners.

II. Analysis

The PSP has assembled a competent and experienced team of highly ranked academics that inspire confidence in delivering the programme well, covering adequately all aspects of PSP courses. As per the last (Feb 2021) ECE integrated master program accreditation report: the faculty are active in professional and academic meetings and conferences. Processes for hiring and promotion follow the accepted protocols for all Greek Universities while many faculty members are doing outstanding work. Furthermore: the Department has excellent researchers, including world-class and award-winning researchers, on the cutting edge of their respective fields. This naturally leads such faculty to incorporate research excellence into the classroom.

However, the same accreditation report has highlighted some weakness, which, apparently, have not been taken care for. Some of them risk to have an impact also on the proposed new PSP. This has to do mainly with the small number of faculty and the corresponding high teaching load. On the contrary, the proposed PSP, due its inherent cross sectoral and interdepartmental nature, could ameliorate some of the unbalances identified in the 2021 report.

A suitable external advisory board along with all contacts with other academic, research or industrial entities, besides the obvious contribution to the stated PSP goals, will assist the faculty members in their further academic and research development. One negative comment regarding the PSP presentations and discussions concerns the use by the faculty of the terms “autonomy” or “autonomous systems” which were repeatedly confused with the terms “unmanned” or “automated”. This makes even more important the re-alignment of the PSP title in line with its stated goals and content.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, leading this interdepartmental PSP, has put together a well selected team of established and accredited academics across three AUTH Departments and, potentially, some experts external to AUTH, to deliver the proposed PSP. Indeed, the Panel had a very positive impression from the discussions with those staff members who participated in the accreditation interactive meetings. One more reason why such accredited and esteemed academics should be more precise on the use of some terms that project wrong / misleading impressions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R4.1 Pursue the 2021 report recommendations regarding the academic staff.

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 academic units appear to provide most of the infrastructure necessary to support the PSP operation. Due to the nature of this assessment, a full in person inspection of the facilities could not be facilitated, however, supplementary materials including images and a live demonstration of the laboratories, have been provided. In particular, access to the university library, IT systems, laboratories and classrooms, alongside any necessary online study material, is provided to the students. Furthermore, the administrative part demonstrated a high level of organization, thus pointing to a smooth administrative operation.

II. Analysis

The three Departments involved in the programme appear to provide most of the necessary facilities, infrastructure and services for the PSP needs. The administrative staff is very professional and well-organized

III. Conclusions

The PSP fully complies with the HAHE requirements for Principle 5.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

No specific recommendations under Principle 5.

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 documentation highlighted that there is place a well-established procedure for monitoring and periodic reviewing this PSP. There is a clear distribution of responsibilities and roles of all parties involved. The monitoring process involves

most appropriate stakeholders, namely the Internal Evaluation Teams of the Departments involved, the Departmental academic and administrative staff, and the students. External stakeholders are involved in the form of a three-member advisory committee. The evaluations are expected to take place annually and cover all aspects of such an evaluation exercise (program content, workload, student assessment, etc.). Faculty and staff of the involved institutions are aware of the importance of external review and the benefits it brings to the continuous improvement of the programme.

II. Analysis

Overall, an effective mechanism is in place for internal feedback, which is used for annual internal reviews and audits. The faculties of both institutions are fully aware of the importance of external assessment. The EEAP met with the potential External Advisory Board members during the meeting with the stakeholders EEAP commends the PSP's proactive approach.

III. Conclusions

The PSP meets HAHE's requirements for establishing procedures for periodic internal and external evaluations and integrating feedback into programme development for continuous improvement.

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

No specific recommendations under Principle 6.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- Well-documented strategic alignment with clear goals, industrial and national priorities.
- A curriculum with emphasis academic rigor and strong relevance to industry needs.
- Proactive in establishing a suitable External Advisory Board, through good relations and engagement with a variety of stakeholders.
- A comprehensive quality assurance policy aligned with EQF Level 7 and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015).
- Clear, structured student support systems, scholarships and welfare services.
- Commitment to e-learning integration, enabling flexible learning and accessibility.
- Encouragement of the students for research and development involvement through project-based work and thesis.

II. Areas of Weakness

- PSP title not in line with the course courses and objectives
- No clear contribution of stakeholder involvement in the initial curriculum design.
- No clear evidence of how the internal student course evaluation process can be improved from potentially low student participation.
- No clear strategy on having the students exposed to industrial problems.
- No external teachers, from relevant industry and public sectors, are involved in teaching in the programme.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Realign the PSP title with its stated goals and content by either changing the title to “unmanned” rather than “autonomous” systems or by introducing suitable course content on autonomy to better reflect the title of the PSP “Aerial Autonomous Systems”.
- Introduce courses in the curriculum relevant to AI.
- Introduce courses in the curriculum relevant to control of autonomous systems.
- Establish an External Advisory Board consisting of stakeholders, senior government/industry and technology officials to advise the programme administrators regarding the strategic development, enhancement and sustainability of the programme.
- Put in place a formal process for the active participation of students in the curriculum development of the new programme.
- Promote interaction and cooperation with similar university programmes abroad.
- The Department should make every effort to secure a good level of student

participation in the internal evaluation process.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:
The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:
The Principle where substantial compliance has been achieved is: 2.
The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:
The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None.
The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:
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
BOTSIS IOANNIS	Signed by BOTSIS IOANNIS - 26/06/2025 22:09:00 +03:00
ANDRITSOS FIVOS	Signed by ANDRITSOS FIVOS - 26/06/2025 22:09:00 +03:00
G. SELIMIS DIMITRIOS	Signed by G. SELIMIS DIMITRIOS - 26/06/2025 22:09:00 +03:00
KONTIS KONSTANTINOS	Signed by KONTIS KONSTANTINOS - 26/06/2025 22:09:00 +03:00
SALONITIS KONSTANTINOS	Signed by SALONITIS KONSTANTINOS - 26/06/2025 22:09:00 +03:00