



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστέιδου 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 Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases

Department: Medicine

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 7 October 2023



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
**Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση**
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the postgraduate study programme of **Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases** of the **DEMOCRITUS UNIVERSITY OF THRACE** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Stefanos Volianitis PhD, DSc (Chair)**
Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

- 2. Dr. Konstantinos Pantopoulos**
McGill University, Montreal, Canada

- 3. Dr. Nicholas Ktistakis,**
Babraham Institute, Cambridge, UK

- 4. Mr. Sotirios Mavromatis**
Student, University of Patras, Patras, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) formed an external and independent panel of experts to assess the compliance of the postgraduate study programme of **Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases** of the Democritus University of Thrace in accordance with the HAHE Quality Assurance requirements (v. 4957/2022). The assessment was conducted through document reviews and online interviews. The method used was an evidence-based process centred on a sampling of the Department's activities and it was aimed at evaluating the fulfilment of the HAHE requirements of the relevant Quality Standard of the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) and commenting on its compliance, effectiveness, and applicability for the scope of the requirements. The entire evaluation and accreditation exercise did not include a site visit of the Department and University campus in Alexandroupoli but was carried out remotely using the Zoom platform.

AP members had the first virtual meeting on Monday October 2 at 15:00 (Athens time) to introduce each other and establish a modus operandi regarding the exercise of accreditation. The AP Review of the PSP started formally on Monday, 2 October 2023 at 16:00 (Athens time) via Zoom. In the first part of this virtual meeting, the Director of the PSP and Head of the Department Prof. Vadikolias Konstantinos and the President of MODIP Prof. Grigoriou Marirena familiarised the panel with the department (facts and figures). An overview of the department's origins, history, evolution, and current status was presented in a video that was available to the AP members in advance. A virtual tour of the laboratories, teaching, facilities, and instrumentation was presented in a video, which was also available to the AP members in advance. Members of the PSP Steering Committee, Prof. Heliopoulos Ioannis and Assoc. Prof. Terzoudi Aikaterini, and OMEA member, Prof. Anagnostopoulos Konstantinos were also present in this meeting.

The second day included interviews with the teaching staff, students, graduates, employers, and social partners. Interviews and discussion with teaching staff members Prof. Theodosio Birbili, Prof. Grigorio Tripsiani, Prof. Ioanni Elloul, Em. Prof. Sevasti Bostatzopoulou, Prof. Christo Krogia, Em. Prof. George Kolio, and Prof. Ioanni Seimeni, were held in the first meeting. The meeting with current students included 10 students from all semesters. After the meeting with the current students, a meeting with 10 graduates of the PSP was held. The following graduates were present: Ntoskas Triantafyllos, Director Neurology Dpt, Athens Naval Hospital; Charalampopoulos Konstantinos, Consultant Neurologist, Military Hospital, Alexandroupolis; Kallivoulos Stelios, Consultant Neurologist, AHEPA Hospital, Thessaloniki; Saoulidis Apostolos, Consultant Neurologist, General Hospital of Kavala; Kitmeridou Sophia, Consultant Neurologist, University Hospital of Alexandroupolis; Bebeletsi Pasxalina, Psychotherapist, University Hospital of Alexandroupolis; Tsaoulia Aikaterini, Resident in Radiology; Gkantzios Aimilios, Consultant Neurologist, Athens; Karatzetzou Stella, Resident in Neurology, AHEPA Hospital, Thessaloniki; Tsalkidis Dimos, Resident in Neurology, University Hospital of Alexandroupolis.

The meeting with industry representatives and social partners was held with the following participants: Prof. Tsivgouli Georgio, European Stroke Organization Vice President, President of the Hellenic Neurological Society; Prof. Proio Harriet, President of the Stroke Alliance for Europe; Prof. Hadjigeorgiou Georgio, Dean of the Medical School, University of Cyprus, Director of the University Department of Neurology; Prof. Grigoriadi Nikolao, Director of the Department of Neurology, AHEPA Hospital, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Gen Secretary of the Hellenic Neurological Society; Ass. Prof. Katsano Aristeidi, Assistant Editor “Stroke”, Mc Master University, Investigator at the Population Health Research Institute; Dr. Jobst Rudolf, NHS Director, Stroke Unit, Papageorgiou Hospital, Thessaloniki; Dr. Petropoulou Konstantina, Scientific Director of Neurorehab. and neuroplasticity Unit, Attica Rehabilitation Center, Athens, President of the special interest section in Neurorehabilitation of Hellenic Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine; Ass. Prof. Vlotinou Penelope, University of West Attica, Representative of the Hellenic Alliance – Action for Stroke (HASsso), Occupational Therapist; Prof. Thodi Ilia, Representative of Executive Council, Stavridion Foundation, and Emer. Prof. Artemi Nikolao, A.U.TH, founder member and former President of the Hellenic Society of Cerebrovascular Diseases.

Upon completion of the two days of online meetings, the AP recognized a positive atmosphere and a willingness of the Department to cooperate and support the University's QA policy at all levels with a commitment to maintaining and further upgrading the quality standards of the postgraduate study program in compliance with HAHE. The AP would like to thank the Department and University Administration as well as all faculty members for their cooperation and fruitful discussions. The AP members had remote online meetings for the completion of the draft Accreditation Report (AR) during 5-7 October, 2023. The online form at HAHE's website was used for compilation and submission of the report.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The PSP was initially established in 15/9/2014 (FEK 2448) and re-established in 10/7/2018 (FEK 2746).

In accordance with the Strategic Planning principles of the Democritus University of Thrace the PSP aims to: (a) further promote the knowledge and specialization of graduates in theoretical and applied areas in the field of cerebrovascular events and cerebrovascular diseases; (b) to provide students with resources for the management of stroke patients from the acute phase to the chronic process of rehabilitation and introduce concepts such as support, care and social management; (c) to help build specialized scientific capacity in the holistic management of stroke patients.

Graduates of the PSP are enhancing their employment opportunities in Stroke and Rehabilitation units both in Public hospitals and Private Health Institutions.

The duration of studies is 4 semesters (30 ECTS each) including a Thesis (20 ECTS) and the qualification awarded is Master's Degree in «Stroke – Cerebrovascular Diseases».

It is the only PSP in Greece that addresses the area of Cerebrovascular Diseases. Even though it provides significant further knowledge to already specialized medical doctors in relevant specializations, nevertheless, the PSP accepts students also from graduates of Schools and Departments of Health Sciences and Psychology, Biomedical Sciences, Social Administration and Social Work and related disciplines.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND QUALITY GOAL SETTING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit should be in line with the quality assurance policy of the Institution and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study programmes offered by the academic unit.

Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's improvement.

In particular, in order to implement this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff for the PSP*
- e) the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP*
- f) the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labour market*
- g) the quality of support services, such as the administrative services, the libraries and the student welfare office for the PSP*
- h) the efficient utilisation of the financial resources of the PSP that may be drawn from tuition fees*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Documentation

- *Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP*
- *Quality goal setting of the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Medicine, in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (MO.DI.P.) of the Democritus University of Thrace has harmonized the Quality Policy of the offered Postgraduate Program (PSP) with the Quality Policy of the Democritus University of Thrace.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the Department of Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine, with the commitment of the Head, as well as the rest of the Department's staff, is demonstrated with the link of the desired Educational Outcomes with the Strategy and the vision of the University. The objectives include the continuous improvement of the PSP with continuous curriculum adjustments following the latest developments, specializations and knowledge in the field, continuous upgrading of teaching tools, interconnection of the PSP with research programs, synergies with external bodies related to the field of health, as well as the research upgrade and promotion of the Department.

The results of the internal and external evaluation of the Department of Medicine are posted on the website of the Department of Medicine (<http://med.duth.gr>) available with the parallel registration of the required information and data in the National Quality Information System (ΟΠΕΣΠ) of the ΕΤΗΑΑΕ.

The academic unit has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals regarding the PSP, and especially in respect of teaching methods, student satisfaction, learning outcomes and research output.

Upon obtaining the degree, postgraduate students will be better trained to: treat patients with cerebrovascular events and cerebrovascular diseases depending on their specialty from the acute phase to the chronic process of rehabilitation based on modern guidelines and knowledge synthesis; make a more complex and holistic management of cerebrovascular events, as well as being informed about the social and economic effects of cerebrovascular events at the level of society, family and the health system.

II. Analysis

The Quality assurance policy of the PSP is in alignment with the policy of Democritus University of Thrace.

The learning outcomes of the PSP are appropriate for level 7, according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The Quality goals set meet the overall accreditation Standards of HAHE.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is fully compliant with the Standards for Criterion 1.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, THE DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES SHOULD BE ASSESSED. THE ABOVE DETAILS, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

The academic units develop their postgraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the research character, the scientific objectives, the specific subject areas, and specialisations are described at this stage.

The structure, content and organisation of courses and teaching methods should be oriented towards deepening knowledge and acquiring the corresponding skills to apply the said knowledge (e.g. course on research methodology, participation in research projects, thesis with a research component).

The expected learning outcomes must be determined based on the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF), and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. During the implementation of the programme, the degree of achievement of the expected learning outcomes and the feedback of the learning process must be assessed with the appropriate tools. For each learning outcome that is designed and made public, it is necessary that its evaluation criteria are also designed and made public.

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active involvement of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for level 7*
- *the option of providing work experience to students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the PSP by the Institution*

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Documentation

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP*
- *PSP curriculum structure: courses, course categories, ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a relevant scientific field*
- *PSP Student Guide*
- *Course and thesis outlines*
- *Teaching staff (name list including of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship, and teaching assignment in hours as well as other teaching commitments in hours)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The programme been designed based on appropriate standards and it has the following characteristics: 120 Credit Units (ECTS) are required to obtain the degree; compulsory attendance and successful examination in all compulsory courses and workshops, distributed over the four semesters of study (A, B, C and D), are required; online teaching hours up to 60% of the total; possibility of asynchronous training.

There is no equivalent program in Greece, while at the European level the relevant programs are extremely limited. The program follows the thematic modules that cover the field of cerebrovascular events and cerebrovascular diseases internationally.

The structure of the programme is rational and clearly articulated.

Even though it is stated in the Accreditation Proposal (pg. 13) that the Coordination committee of the PSP recommends that the instructors update their teaching material regularly and certain curriculum updates may take place at the beginning of each academic year, nevertheless, there is no formal procedure/regulation in place for periodic revisions of the programme curriculum.

Even though it is stated in the Accreditation Proposal (pg. 11) that there is continuous ongoing contact with graduates and stakeholders that promotes the awareness of the teaching staff with market needs and academic subject development, nevertheless, there is no formal procedure to involve such feedback consultation in a potential curriculum revision.

II. Analysis

Even though the Department is aware of the requirement for regular curriculum revision and the significance of involving the input of graduates and stakeholders in such revision, nevertheless, there are no formal procedures for these functions.

III. Conclusions

The PSP has a commendable curriculum that is comparable with international standards in the subject of Cerebrovascular Events and Diseases. However, the lack of formalised procedures for curriculum update and input from academic and industry stakeholders limits its fulfilment of Principle 2.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

It is recommended that the PSP develops and implements formal procedures for curriculum update and utilisation of the input from academic and industry stakeholders in this process.

PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation, their self-evaluation, and their active participation in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs by adopting flexible learning paths*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys*
- *strengthens the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with the students' complaints*
- *provides counselling and guidance for the preparation of the thesis*

In addition

- *The academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The assessment criteria and methods are published in advance. The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and conducted in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *The function of the academic advisor runs smoothly.*

Documentation

- *Sample of a fully completed questionnaire for the evaluation of the PSP by the students*
- *Regulations for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of academic advisor*
- *Reference to the teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The postgraduate programme "Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases" has a total duration of 2 academic years, while the total number of credits required for the degree is 120 ECTS.

According to the study guide, the total number of courses of this postgraduate programme is 10 plus the master's thesis, which is carried out during the fourth semester. The courses are held every weekend. It is addressed mainly to medical graduates or other health science graduates who are working. As can be seen from the course content, students gain a comprehensive overview of vascular strokes, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. 60% of the courses are remote, but nevertheless a variety of teaching methods are used, such as the use of virtual reality simulators. The evaluation of the courses is mainly carried out by written or oral examinations on topics announced at the beginning of the academic semester, while there are totally three exams periods. Students have the opportunity to evaluate both the content and the teaching method of each course at the end of each academic semester. The results of the evaluations are discussed among the teaching staff to resolve any problems or complaints.

II. Analysis

This Master's program covers a wide range of the field of vascular stroke, while providing students with up-to-date knowledge. The curriculum guide, which is updated annually and provided to students from the beginning of the academic year, is quite detailed and informative. Regarding the content of the courses, they do require more of a medical knowledge background, but nevertheless students from other health schools are fairly satisfied in the understanding and transferability of the lecturers. This is also supported by the various teaching methods used, which are not limited to simple lectures, but include other modern tools, resulting in a better understanding of the courses. It is worth mentioning, also, that the majority of the courses are conducted online, but as the students stated, the communication with the teaching staff was direct and informative enough to solve any kind of questions. It should be noted that the examination method is limited to a single final test during the exam period. Assignments or tests during the semester are not included in the examination method of courses, and so the final grade is dependent solely on the final exam performance. The lecture schedule for the master is limited to weekends, but this seems to favour working graduates. As far as course evaluations are concerned, these are carried out annually and direct discussions are also held between teachers and students, in order to comment on any complaints about the teaching or the content of the course. Comments and observations from the students' side are also discussed between the teachers and appropriate adjustments and modifications are made each year.

III. Conclusions

The present postgraduate programme addresses a very current issue of Vascular Stroke. It ensures that students are informed about all the current developments in this field, both theoretically and practically. There is a limitation regarding the schedule of courses, which take place exclusively on weekends, and the final grade, which depends entirely on the final exam performance.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Increase in practical courses and compulsory in-person lectures.

Include assignments or tests during the semester, so that the final grade is no dependent only on the final exam performance.

The AP encourages the PSP to diversify the teaching and evaluation methods used. These could include more student assignments. For instance, students could be assigned to critically present key primary papers in areas relevant to the course, discuss the results in class, identify important open questions, and propose follow up studies. These assignments could contribute to part of the final grade of the course, which currently mostly depends on a single examination with multiple-choice questions. The assessment criteria and methods should be published in advance on the PSP web site. More opportunities for “hands-on” experience in laboratories should be provided. The AP proposes in future to consider the creation of more laboratory and practical courses. Along these lines, the Accreditation Panel also feels that the students should be encouraged to participate more in research projects aiming to acquire experience in research methodologies and techniques, and possibly lead to publications.

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP admits a specific cohort of students which are mostly medical school graduates but can also include graduates of allied health professions. In recent years the ratio of medic/non-medic has been 75%/25%. The number of students each year ranges from approximately 20 to 30.

Applications from prospective students of the PSP are evaluated by a three-member faculty committee according to a pre-determined formula that takes into account: graduation score, research activity, participation in research conferences or research programmes, and foreign language expertise.

In addition to the above criteria, the PSP admissions committee takes into consideration the volunteering of the prospective students in stroke and rehabilitation units. Finally, a written interview is also used as part of the evaluation procedure.

Academic and research activity of the students of the PSP are well described in documents given to the students at the beginning of their studies. This includes course obligations, how a thesis project is organised and what is required for graduation. In the meetings of the AP with current and recent graduates it was clear that all aspects of this principle are well executed by the PSP.

Course work and thesis take 4 semesters, with the thesis being decided and initiated at the third semester. Very few students graduate within 4 semesters.

Although Erasmus+ is available as an option very few students take advantage of this, perhaps owing to the fact that they are all professionals with full-time jobs.

All course work is in Greek but there is provision to have courses in English if there is such need. Of note, foreign students wanting to be admitted to the PSP must show good knowledge of Greek.

There is a fellowship programme which is aimed at students after they start their studies and requires achieving an “arista” (excellent) score in their courses.

II. Analysis

This PSP is aimed at professionals who work full time and who also want to be academically and practically trained in stroke management and rehabilitation, areas that are relatively neglected in Greece. The programme accommodates such students because it is taught for one weekend each month, and the thesis work can have a flexible location. Although none of the students graduate within the 4 semesters officially listed, in the opinion of the AP extending this time will not help. The main reason for the delay is that the students need to balance their full-time jobs with their studies.

III. Conclusions

Well-designed and run PS that fulfils an important requirement for post graduate education of medical professionals in Greece in the area of strokes.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Consider more courses being offered in English
- Encourage more students to consider Erasmus+ by allowing them to use this time for their thesis work.
- Continue to offer the educational trip to Zurich to attend the world-famous stroke unit there.

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP has recruited highly qualified faculty from the Department of Medicine of the Democritus University of Thrace, but also faculty members from various Medical Departments within Greece or abroad. The PSP has also recruited faculty from non-Medical Departments and teaching staff including specialized scientists with expertise on Stroke and vascular brain disorders. The Department of Medicine lists merit-based criteria and procedures that are followed for the recruitment of new academic personnel.

There are no specific professional development opportunities offered by the Department of Medicine or the Democritus University of Thrace. Teaching mobility is encouraged, and sabbatical leaves are supported financially by the University.

The courses are offered in intense lectures over weekends.

The faculty has acquired state-of-the art equipment, such as a 3T MRI scanner for patient care, through competitive grants.

II. Analysis

The faculty has a very good academic profile with publications in specialized scientific journals. Many faculty members and external collaborators are active clinicians with significant clinical expertise. Some external collaborators are high internationally recognized leaders in the field of Stroke. This indicates merit-based criteria and procedures for recruitment to the PSP.

Even though participation in Erasmus faculty exchange programs is encouraged, none of the faculty members has taken advantage of this opportunity thus far.

The workload of the teaching staff is appropriate and certainly does not preclude participation in other research or clinical activities. The intense format of the courses over weekends allows participation of students from other parts of Greece, who regularly travel to Alexandroupolis to attend the lectures.

There is a quite strong linkage of teaching with research, especially during the implementation of the diploma work. The availability of a 3T MRI scanner through competitive grants is an asset and offers great research opportunities. Nevertheless, during the remote interviews, the Accreditation Panel got the impression that mostly local students based in Alexandroupolis can take advantage of it for research projects. This is because local students have daily access to the equipment but can also frequently interact with the faculty and teaching staff.

Most remote students are residents, specialized clinicians or rehabilitation specialists working in other hospitals, medical centres, or rehabilitation units. They interact with patients and have access to patient data. The students are encouraged to generate new data or use currently available patient databases for research purposes.

The teaching staff is regularly evaluated by the students in satisfaction questionnaires. The results provided to the accreditation panel show a very high average score for faculty and teaching staff in the surveys. The same picture emerged during the remote interviews of the Accreditation Panel members with current students and alumni of the PSP.

III. Conclusions

The Accreditation Panel appreciated the qualifications and the enthusiastic engagement of the faculty and teaching staff. They all have a significant contribution in the success of the PSP, which is highly specialized and focuses on specific thematic areas. Emphasis is given on research projects that take advantage of the availability of the 3T MRI scanner. The results are excellent in terms of research output and student involvement. The Accreditation Panel discussed potential limitations related to the fact that students are not full-time participants and most of them are not based in Alexandroupolis. The leaders of the PSP argued convincingly that this is the only realistic option. They also mentioned that an established and highly successful European MSc program with similar content (the only one currently available in Europe) uses the same format.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel encourages a stronger involvement of students in research programs, if necessary, also at remote locations. The goal should be to make the PSP even more research-oriented and complement its teaching program, which provides excellent qualifications to clinicians for up-to-date management of Stroke. Finally, the Accreditation Panel recommends the faculty members to utilize mobility opportunities, such as those offered by the Erasmus program.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR 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, NETWORKS, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources and means, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, so as to offer PSP students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as the necessary general and more specialised libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, IT and communication services, support and counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance proves -on the one hand- the quantity and quality of the available facilities and services, and -on the other hand- that students are aware of all available services.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Documentation

- *Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit for the PSP, to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding firm commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources*
- *Administrative support staff of the PSP (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*
- *Tuition utilisation plan (if applicable)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Medicine and the University Hospital offer to the PSP several lecture halls, seminar rooms and laboratories. All these teaching areas are equipped with modern audio-visual infrastructure and are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Students of the PSP have access to the central library of the Democritus University of Thrace, and the library of the Department of Medicine. An e-class platform is provided to students, which contains details on content of courses and teaching material. Every student is offered an email account, access to eduroam wi-fi and the virtual private network (VPN) of the University, as well as access to the e-class platform.

There is dedicated administrative staff for learning resources and student support. An academic advisor can consult students on several issues related to the academic program,

academic life and professional perspectives and opportunities. A structure for psychosocial services to students is in place; this deals with any problems related to stress, integration into academic life, adaptation, emotional instability, or substance abuse. A “student attorney” is offered to deal with student complaints and interfere with the University administration in case of conflicts. Information on these services is provided on the central University web site.

The Director of the PSP oversees administrative matters and is responsible for academic and financial decisions. He or she is member of the PSP steering committee and has a term of 2 years that can be renewed. The Director does not get any salary supplement for this work and provides a detailed report to the Department at the end of the steering committee’s term on academic, administrative, and financial issues related to the PSP. A detailed budget breakdown for the past four academic years was provided.

II. Analysis

Based on the audio-visual material presented to the Accreditation Panel during the remote interviews, the seminar rooms and overall infrastructure of the PSP seem to be in excellent condition. The access of students to the University and departmental libraries covers their needs regarding specialized literature.

The students are given informative and promotional material on the PSP. The syllabus is provided to each student, while the internal rules and regulations and housekeeping announcements are posted on the PSP web site.

There is a plan for utilization of tuition fees and other financial resources such as donations. The funds of the PSP are managed centrally by a specific research funds financial administration unit (ELKE), which charges 30% overheads. The remaining funds cover operational expenses such as administrative and infrastructural support, salary supplements to teaching staff, support for conference participation, or miscellaneous expenses.

III. Conclusions

The Accreditation Panel agreed that the PSP is fully compliant to the requirements on learning resources and student support. The support offered to the students is excellent, even within the constraints of the part-time PSP format. The detailed budget breakdown shows a thoughtful distribution and utilization of the PSP income. The Accreditation Panel found that the web site is generally well-designed and functional; however, the English version is incomplete and requires improvement.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel recommends to the PSP organizers to take actions for the addition of visible links to student services in the PSP web site.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Medicine has established procedures for data collection. The data include: evaluation of teaching quality by students via satisfaction surveys, statistics on teaching load of faculty, PSP student records, infrastructure and building records, faculty research grants, other performance indicators for faculty (publications, citations), student care and support services.

II. Analysis

Several platforms are used for data collection; a detailed list is provided. Data are processed and analysed by the Department of Medicine and communicated to the general assembly of the Department for further evaluation and utilization. During the remote interviews, the Accreditation Panel got the impression that the results of the internal evaluations are

considered very seriously, and the PSP and actions are taken to resolve any arising issues. Nevertheless, it appears that student participation to satisfaction surveys appears to be low.

III. Conclusions

The Accreditation Panel found the PSP fully compliant to the guidelines for Information Management. Nevertheless, it also identified a minor issue due to the lack of PSP-related data on the PSP web site.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel recommends the addition of data regarding student population profile, student progression, drop-out rates, and alumni professional success on the PSP web site. The data presentation should also include graphs to allow direct interpretation and comparisons.

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Information on the activities of the PSP is fairly good in the Greek version of the website (<http://strokeduth.gr/>) but very incomplete in the English version (<http://strokeduth.gr/en/home-en/>). For example, if somebody tries to find information of the PSP under the section "Program", the links are all in Greek and no explanations are given on what is being listed.

There is also on the website not a lot of detailed information on student pass rates, graduation rates, times to graduation etc. The AP understands that these websites will be re-designed centrally, and it will be important for the PSP to be more explicit in their presentations in the new website.

In addition to the focus in the educational aspects, the PSP has also developed strong activity on outwards looking matters such as participation in national and international conferences as part of the Hellenic Society of Cerebrovascular Diseases. Information on these activities is complete but only available in the Greek version of the website

II. Analysis

The PSP has developed an excellent mechanism for communicating its activities which is well documented in the Greek version of the website. The AP notes with satisfaction the annual excursion of the students of the PSP to centres of excellence outside of Greece, and their participation in seminars and other activities, thus promoting the PSP abroad.

III. Conclusions

Although the English aspect needs improvement, the PSP promotes its activities very well in Greece and abroad.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Improve the English version of the website so that the exemplary activities of the PSP can be promoted to a foreign audience.

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

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

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

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date*
 - b) the changing needs of society*
 - c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies*
 - d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students*
 - e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
 - f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*
- Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.*

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP is evaluated by the OMEA and MODIP organisations of the University of Thrace in a timely and thorough manner that helps identify areas of concern that require improvement.

The AP also found that discussions between faculty members about the progress and the problems of the PSP are frequent, although not on a formal basis.

There is a very good set of justifications for the existence of this PSP based on the poor state of stroke care in Greece and the absence of well qualified personnel. In addition, as was discussed during our visit, medical problems associated with strokes are expected to increase dramatically as the population ages, which is another reason to justify having this programme.

The AP saw evidence that the aims of the PSP, both in terms of academic and practical training, are monitored, and changes are made when required.

The PSP is engaged in several outreach activities with the community on the subject of stroke care, and this is an additional mechanism to incorporate feedback from the stakeholders.

Finally, in the conversations of the AP with employers and social partners, the high regard of the graduates of the programme was very clear.

II. Analysis

The PSP has good mechanisms in place to monitor, evaluate and alter its academic and practical pursuits.

III. Conclusions

Principle 9 is well covered by the PSP

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

The postgraduate programme "Stroke-Cerebrovascular Diseases" has not been previously subjected to any external evaluation and accreditation process. The faculty members were forthcoming in conducting the accreditation process, as they answered the committee's numerous questions and provided the necessary paperwork. It is worth mentioning that all professors present in the process, as well as the postgraduate program's director, seemed to recognize the importance of accreditation and its contribution to the improvement of the postgraduate programme's quality. They were all very enthusiastic and respectful to the recommendations made by the AP.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Quality assurance policy of the PSP is in alignment with the policy of Democritus University of Thrace. The PSP has a commendable curriculum that is comparable with international standards in the subject of Cerebrovascular Events and Diseases.
- The learning outcomes of the PSP are appropriate for level 7, according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.
- The faculty has a very good academic profile with publications in specialized scientific journals. Many faculty members and external collaborators are active clinicians with significant clinical expertise. Some external collaborators are high internationally recognized leaders in the field of Stroke.
- There is a quite strong linkage of teaching with research, especially during the implementation of the diploma work. The availability of a 3T MRI scanner through competitive grants is an asset and offers great research opportunities.
- The overall infrastructure of the PSP seems to be in excellent condition. There is dedicated administrative staff for learning resources and student support. There is a plan for utilization of tuition fees and other financial resources such as donations.
- The Department of Medicine has established procedures for data collection. The results of the internal evaluations are considered very seriously, and the PSP and actions are taken to resolve any arising issues.
- Academic and research activity of the students of the PSP are well described in documents given to the students at the beginning of their studies. This includes course obligations, how a thesis project is organised and what is required for graduation.
- Although the English language aspect of information sharing needs improvement, the PSP promotes its activities very well in Greece and abroad.
- The PSP has good mechanisms in place to monitor, evaluate and alter its academic and practical pursuits.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Lack of formalised procedures for curriculum update and input from academic and industry stakeholders.
- There are no specific professional development opportunities offered by the Department of Medicine or the Democritus University of Thrace.
- None of the faculty members has taken advantage of Erasmus faculty exchange programs thus far.
- Mostly local students based in Alexandroupolis can take advantage of the availability of a 3T MRI scanner for research projects.

- Student participation to satisfaction surveys appears to be low.
- The English version of the web site is incomplete
- Lectures take place exclusively on weekends either in person or online.
- There are not a lot of practical courses.
- Evaluation of courses is dependent only on the final grade.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- It is recommended that the PSP develops and implements formal procedures for curriculum update and utilisation of the input from academic and industry stakeholders in this process.
- A stronger involvement of students in research programs, if necessary, also at remote locations is encouraged. The goal should be to make the PSP even more research-oriented and complement its teaching program, which provides excellent qualifications to clinicians for up-to-date management of Stroke. Faculty members should utilize mobility opportunities, such as those offered by the Erasmus program.
- The English version of the web site requires improvement.
- Data regarding student population profile, student progression, drop-out rates, and alumni professional success should be added on the PSP web site. The data presentation should also include graphs to allow direct interpretation and comparisons.
- Consider more courses being offered in English
- Encourage more students to consider Erasmus+ by allowing them to use this time for their thesis work.
- Continue to offer the educational trip to Zurich to attend the world-famous stroke unit there.
- Evaluation methods should be improved, in order to include more type of assessments
- The lectures' schedule should be increased to more than a three-day session.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **3.**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None.**

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Stefanos Volianitis PhD, DSc (Chair)**
Qatar University, Doha, Qatar
- 2. Dr. Konstantinos Pantopoulos**
McGill University, Montreal, Canada
- 3. Dr. Nicholas Ktistakis,**
Babraham Institute, Cambridge, UK
- 4. Mr. Sotirios Mavromatis**
Student, University of Patras, Patras, Greece