



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή  
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης  
Hellenic Authority  
for Higher Education

Αριστοτέλους 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Euripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece  
T. +30 210 9220 944 • F. +30 210 9220 143 • E. [secretariat@ethaee.gr](mailto:secretariat@ethaee.gr) • [www.ethaee.gr](http://www.ethaee.gr)

## **Accreditation Report for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:**

**Maintenance and Reclamation of Terrestrial Natural  
Ecosystems**

**Department: Forestry and Management of the Environment  
and Natural Resources**

**Institution: Democritus University of Thrace**

**Date: 24 November 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 **Maintenance and Reclamation of Terrestrial Natural Ecosystems** 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 **Maintenance and Reclamation of Terrestrial Natural Ecosystems** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

**1. PAVLOSTATHIS SPYROS (Chair)**

School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology

**2. KATOPODES NIKOLAOS**

University of Michigan

**3. PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS**

Universidade do Algarve

**4. MOURKAS KONSTANTINOS**

University of Patras

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems of the Democritus University of Thrace, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEA Panel) reviewed a multitude of materials provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices. The programme review was conducted via teleconference, organized and coordinated by HAHE and the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). The schedule and agenda of the review were as stated below.

Monday, 13/11/2023:

- a) Preliminary private meeting of the EEA Panel. Discussion of the programme under review; assignment of writing parts of the draft accreditation report to the members of the EEA Panel.
- b) Welcome meeting and short overview of the two PSPs with the Head of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources Prof. G. Tsandopoulos, the Director of the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems (PSP1) Prof. M. Orfanoudakis, the PSP1 Steering Committee member Prof. K. Radoglou, the Head of the Department of Civil Engineering Prof. L. Iliadis, the Director of the PSP Hydrometeorological Disasters Management (PSP2) Prof. Ch. Akratos, the PSP2 Steering Committee member Prof. and Rector F. Maris, the President of MODIP Prof. M. Grigoriou, the MODIP staff Mrs. S. Gkavaki and Mrs. S. Marsidou, the PSP1 OMEA members Profs. A. Kyriazopoulos and S. Galatsidas, and the PSP2 OMEA members Profs. G. Botzoris and A. Kogetsof: presentation of DUTH quality assurance policy, current status and future developments, as well as presentations and discussion of PSP1 and PSP2 history, academic profile, current status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern, degree compliance to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, etc.
- c) Meeting with PSP1 & PSP2 teaching staff and administrative staff members: Discussion of facilities and learning resources.
- d) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only).

Tuesday, 14/11/2023:

- a) Meeting and discussion with PSP1 Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems teaching staff members Profs. E. Milios, V. Drosos, K. Kitikidou, V. Dimou, G. Korakis, and researchers Mrs. M. Fotelli and Mrs. M. Pleniou.
- b) Meeting and discussion with five (5) current PSP1 students.
- c) Meeting and discussion with seven (7) recent PSP1 graduates.
- d) Meeting and discussion with employers

and PSP1 social partners: Mr. S. Diamantopoulos, OMICRON Environmental Consultants SA; Mr. P. Mouchtarides, Chief Officer, Forest Service Xanthi; Mrs. A. Konstantinidou, Coordinator, Management Board of Dadia-Soufli, Evros; Mr. K. Papaioannou, Akritis AE; Mr. O. Giovanopoulos, Agroforestry Cooperation-General Partnership.

e) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only): discussion of the outcomes and findings of the PSP1 virtual visit; preparation of oral report.

f) Closure meeting with the Head of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, PSP1 Director and Steering Committee faculty, MODIP President and staff, and OMEA faculty members: informal, oral presentation of the EEA Panel PSP1 key findings and clarifications.

Wednesday, 15/11/2023:

Teleconference meetings related to PSP2 Hydrometeorological Disasters Management of the Democritus University of Thrace.

Thursday 16/11/2023 to Thursday 23/11/2023:

Draft report writing. EEA Panel virtual meetings. Review and finalization of draft report.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEA Panel was in close communication with the Department and the PSP1 administration, which were very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEA Panel. The EEA Panel found that the Department and the PSP1 administration, as well as the faculty, staff, current students, and recent graduates interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

### **III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile**

The postgraduate study programme (PSP) Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems is organized and offered by the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), located in Orestiada. The programme was initially established and started with the academic year 2018-2019 (Official Gazette 2670/B/06-07-2018) and operates with the latest Graduate Programme Regulations update in 2022 (Official Gazette 7068/B/31-12- 2022).

The objectives of the PSP are the training and specialization of scientists in the development and application of modern methods and techniques related to the conservation and restoration of terrestrial natural ecosystems. Specifically, it aims to understand the structure and function of terrestrial natural ecosystems, their biodiversity, and the impact of climate change and human activities; the use of modern methods and techniques in recording and monitoring ecosystems; and the selection of best management and restoration practices for the rehabilitation of disturbed ecosystems.

Teaching in the PSP is provided by faculty and teaching staff of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources (DUTH), as well as external specialized scientists from academic and research Institutions. Specialized technical staff and administrative staff assist the PSP.

The programme has set at twenty-five (25) the maximum number of admitted students per academic year. In the academic year 2022-2023, the number of admitted students was 9, the number of all registered postgraduate students was 18, while the number of finished graduates (i.e., those that completed all requirements and graduated) was 24. The total number of PSP graduates since its initial establishment in 2018 is 57. Most of the current students and recent graduates the EEA Panel interviewed stated that the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems of the Democritus University of Thrace was among their first choice based on the curriculum, methodologies used, and familiarity.

The PSP consists of a minimum of three (3) academic semesters study resulting in level 7 Diploma of Postgraduate Studies. To graduate, the student must have successfully completed a total of 90 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (60 ECTS for coursework and 30 ECTS for the preparation and successful completion of the postgraduate thesis). Lectures for the first semester (4 courses) and second semester (4 courses) are given remotely, synchronously. Attendance in lectures is mandatory and final examinations are administered in-person on campus. There are no elective courses offered. Students' participation in Internship training is possible, but not required. The EEA Panel found that the number of courses offered cover advanced as well as new topics and technologies in Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems.

The PSP prepares graduates for careers in both the private and public sector of the economy,

such as forest services and industry, environmental services, consulting companies, public bodies, as well as secondary education. There are strong links to the society, which is key priority of the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems, the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, and the Institution.

The Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources offers three (3) postgraduate study programmes and supports doctoral studies.



## **PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Documentation**

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

#### **Study Programme Compliance**

##### **I. Findings**

The Institution has developed and implemented its Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy (<https://duth.gr/en/University/Quality-Assurance-Unit>; [https://duth.gr/Portals/0/-%20-final-logo\\_certified.pdf](https://duth.gr/Portals/0/-%20-final-logo_certified.pdf)). The Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, in

collaboration with the University Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) and the Department Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA), has harmonized the quality policy of the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems with that of the University, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the PSP, as well as that of the academic unit and other educational programmes.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP is publicly accessible from the Department website (<https://fmenr.duth.gr/>) and includes adequate reference to the PSP delivery, including commitments to satisfy requirements and strive for continuous improvement. In addition to OMEA, a departmental Coordinating/Steering Committee further aids in the overall quality assurance of the PSP and the Department.

The processes and procedures used for the monitoring and continuous improvement of the quality of the PSP are as follows: a) The strict implementation of the PSP Policy for Quality Assurance; b) The optimal disposition and management of the PSP resources, including those resulting from tuition fees; c) The establishment of Quality Assurance objectives of the PSP on an annual basis;

d) The periodic internal evaluation and monitoring of the PSP on an annual basis; e) The collection of Quality Data, quantitation, analysis and improvement of the PSP; f) The disclosure and publication of all information related to the PSP made publicly accessible; g) The periodic external evaluation and accreditation following established procedures by HAHE.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP is closely monitored through the course/instructor evaluation by the students, the collection of data by the OMEA and transfer to MODIP on an annual basis. Training of the PSP teaching staff is accomplished with the help of the DUTH Support Teaching & Learning Centre (<https://duth.gr/en/Services/Structures/Teaching-Support-Office>).

## **II. Analysis**

The structure and organization of the PSP is well thought out and in line with the overall goal of the programme. The advanced material covered along with the study of new technologies in the area of Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems result in learning outcomes and qualifications of the postgraduate students consistent with Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. Teaching methods, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction are all explained in the PSP Study Guide.

The Quality Assurance Policy is sufficiently communicated to all parties involved. The PSP has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals regarding the postgraduate programme. However, the number of targets is limited. In particular, the following targets are not set and thus are not monitored: annual percentage of graduates to all registered students; grade point average of postgraduate theses; research output by the faculty such number of publications, citations and impact; participation of postgraduate students in research such as number of projects in which postgraduate students participate, number of publications with postgraduate students as co-authors, number of conferences in which postgraduate students participate, percentage of postgraduate students who continued for doctoral studies, etc. Based on the

data provided to the EEA Panel, the targets are also paired with suitable key performance indicators (KPIs). Goals are monitored, updated, and communicated, according to the Quality Assurance Policy implemented by the Institution and the PSP. The quality assurance system is reviewed on an annual basis by the OMEA, and results communicated to the University MODIP, which issues an annual report. According to 2023 Quality Targets report, overall the PSP is at a satisfactory point in terms of achieving set targets, with the exception of the number of applicants (9/25), the number of students completing the course/instructor evaluations (10/25), and students' mobility (0/2).

### III. Conclusions

Overall, this is a well-organized PSP focusing on the quality of the offered knowledge and skills. The Department has established a Quality Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP. It includes a commitment for its implementation and continuous improvement. The metrics established by the PSP and the Institution are adequate in tracking and documenting the quality of the programme. However, the number of targets set and monitored by the PSP is limited. The findings are supported by the documents provided to the EEA Panel by the PSP, the interviews with the teaching, support staff and alumni of the programme.

#### Panel Judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 1, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Major improvements made as a result of course/instructor evaluations should be documented, communicated to all involved, and published on the PSP website.
- Increase the number of targets set by the PSP and monitor on an annual basis.
- Interactions with alumni upon their graduation should be exploited as a potential means of informing the decision-making process regarding future directions of the programme.
- Establishment of a formal External Advisory Board should be considered, which will guide the continuous review, revision, and further development of the curriculum.

## **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 EEA Panel found the structure and delivery of the PSP in Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems to be designed carefully and purposefully. The curriculum covers a broad selection of topics in the field of Terrestrial Natural Ecosystems. There are no elective courses; however, both recent graduates and current students have praised the course offerings. The material represents a good extension of the corresponding undergraduate courses; thus, the curriculum offers an opportunity for learning to both graduates of the same Department and students with vastly different backgrounds.

The percentage of students graduating within three semesters is rather low, which is mostly due to delays in the completion of the required thesis. The grading seems fair, and the students are able to focus on learning rather than worrying about grades. The instruction is given both in person and by remote, synchronous delivery, which allows some flexibility for working students and personal contact with the faculty.

Although both the students and the stakeholders of the programme expressed a desire to be involved in the curriculum development, there is no evidence that they have been asked to participate in the process. It is true, however, that the course offerings keep the students engaged in an intense exposure to material that is indispensable, and therefore difficult to replace. It is also worthy of mention that the alumni and stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the technical skills of the programme graduates both in depth and breadth.

### **II. Analysis**

There is a general concern of the EEA Panel regarding the effectiveness of remote delivery, particularly the use of and training in instrumentation for field applications. However, both recent graduates and current students expressed their satisfaction with the accessibility of the faculty, and their willingness to provide help and support.

Overall, the EEA Panel believes that this is an effective PSP. Its particular strength is the dedication of the faculty and their remarkable devotion to teaching and mentoring the students. At the same time, this also the main vulnerability of the programme. The members of the faculty are loaded with an unreasonable number of courses each semester. The senior faculty seem to enjoy their involvement; however, the current situation is unsustainable and potentially harmful to the development of junior faculty.

Finally, the EEA Panel believes that the lack of a formal External Advisory Board that includes the stakeholders of the programme limits the input of senior government and industry officials to the PSP administrators regarding the strategic development of this programme, potential curriculum enhancements, and the discovery of alternative funding sources.

### III. Conclusions

The programme is substantially compliant regarding Principle 2. Some recommendations are made below that may enhance the programme's quality.

#### Panel Judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 2, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Create and publicize an External Advisory Board consisting of senior government and industry officials and seek their advice to the programme regarding the strategic development and enhancement of the curriculum.
- Establish a formal process for the active participation of students in the curriculum development of the programme.
- Reduce the course load to junior faculty by seeking alternative funding sources that will allow the hiring of adjunct faculty.
- Allow for a minimum of elective courses that will present some flexibility to the curriculum. These courses could be undergraduate courses of the home Department, which could be of value to students of the PSP that come from different backgrounds.

### **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 PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems focuses on promoting and delivering cutting-edge knowledge and research on the conservation and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems. The programme's foundation lies in a diverse student mix, fostering learning and deepening understanding in its domain. Student participation is active, involving assignments contributing to transferable

knowledge in various scientific fields. Furthermore, classes are scheduled in the evening to provide flexibility and allow working students to attend the programme. Additionally, up to 35% of the courses are offered through synchronous distance learning.

The academic advisor's role, defined by regulations, complements the small student cohort, reinforcing the student-centred approach. A platform for student complaints and appeals is available, ensuring concerns are addressed. Beyond educational needs, the programme extends to fulfil social and developmental needs of the region and consequently the country. Teaching evaluation questionnaires, transitioning to the MODIP system, provide insights into course content, usefulness, and instructor quality.

The evaluation of instructors by postgraduate students occurs regularly towards the end of each semester through anonymous electronic submission via the Quality Assurance Unit of the University (MODIP/DUTH).

## **II. Analysis**

The programme's structure, integrates theoretical courses and a Diploma thesis, aligning with a student-centred approach. The first two semesters focus on remotely delivered theoretical courses, with mandatory attendance, while the third semester is devoted to thesis research. Students expressed satisfaction with the flexible programme, well-organized lectures.

PSP graduates expressed high satisfaction with their Diploma thesis projects, leading to opportunities for doctoral studies or industry employment. Social partners praised the graduates for the scientific knowledge and expertise acquired through their PSP degree.

## **III. Conclusions**

The PSP aligns with HAHE standards, reflecting high quality and offering graduates opportunities in academia or industry. The EEA Panel confirms full compliance with Principle 3, emphasizing the programme's effectiveness in delivering a robust and impactful educational experience.



### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 3, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The PSP should offer courses in English to enhance programme internationalization.
- Based on student and alumni interviews, there's a preference for hands-on courses (specifically programming and software classes) with a number of in-person lectures for optimal learning.
- The programme could enhance students' motivation for participation in International programmes, such as ERASMUS.

## **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 has set the maximum number of postgraduate students per academic year to 25, selecting candidates from diverse academic backgrounds. The selection process considers various criteria, including CV assessment, English language proficiency, research papers, work experience, and reference letters

The official website of the PSP functions as the central platform for students, offering comprehensive programme information. A detailed student guide, covering admission requirements, study activities, duration, attendance terms, course details, learning outcomes, and the Code of Research Ethics, among others, is published by the Department. This ensures that essential information is readily accessible to students, aiding their application process and facilitating navigation upon enrolment.

Upon acceptance each student is assigned an academic advisor for guidance. The study stages, outlined in the PSP Operating Regulations, include theoretical courses and a Diploma thesis. Examination processes, course grading, and completion of the programme, leading to the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, adhere to regulations.

In terms of students' progression and monitoring, the course examination encompasses various methods, including written or oral examinations, assignments, presentations, reports, or combinations chosen by instructors based on course nature. Each postgraduate student is individually responsible for preparing and defending the thesis publicly. The approval process involves defending the topic in front of a three-member examining committee. There is a

general format how the research thesis should be written and structured outlined in the PSP Operating Regulations. The issuance of the Diploma Supplement, in both Greek and English, is automatic without requiring a request.

The evaluation of instructors by postgraduate students occurs regularly towards the end of each semester (8th – 11th teaching week) through anonymous electronic questionnaire submission via the Quality Assurance Unit of the University (MODIP/DUTH). Instructors can review their individual evaluation results.

The programme follows the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and is structured in 3 semesters each, amounting to 30 ECTS (90 in total).

## **II. Analysis**

The PSP provides a strong foundation in its scientific areas, accommodating students through a more theoretical approach. The programme does not encourage student mobility in internship training, Erasmus+, and other placement programmes, with suggestions for enhanced motivation and integration into the curriculum.

Due to the programme's short duration, practical training is not foreseen. The Department of has established a Regulation for Student Internships, which can also be applied to postgraduate students if there is interest.

## **III. Conclusions**

The PSP aligns with HAHE standards and is acknowledged for its high quality. Feedback from current students, recent graduates, and stakeholders reflects a positive experience with the programme. The EEA Panel affirms the programme's full compliance with Principle 4, recognizing its effectiveness in delivering quality education and meeting stakeholder expectations.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 4, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- In order to enhance the University's outward orientation and connect the programme with the job market, as well as with other Universities on a research level, it is suggested to organize various educational trips to private and public entities. Additionally, student exchanges between similar programmes, either within or outside Greece, should be considered.

## **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 EEA Panel found that the faculty of the PSP have the qualifications necessary to teach the courses of the programme. Both students and recent graduates expressed their appreciation for the instructors' effectiveness in delivering the material at the appropriate depth for a post-graduate programme. Despite their heavy loads, the faculty also assist the students with their projects and theses to the extent allowed by the remote delivery of the programme. There is support available to the faculty through the DUTH Support Teaching & Learning Centre. Research productivity is not uniform among the faculty of the programme, and this is a concern for the development of junior faculty. It is also unclear how the research products are integrated in the PSP curriculum. It is true that some of the instructors have a strong research record.

#### **II. Analysis**

The programme is seriously understaffed, and the teaching loads do not allow for the development of junior faculty. The student-teaching ratio in this PSP is good, which is part of the reason of the success of the student learning process. Most of the course material is delivered in the traditional teaching style that

worked well in the twentieth century. The current teaching loads make it unreasonable to expect any significant teaching innovation; however, this may prove to be an issue in the future. The expectations of the current generation of students have changed, and it is essential to seek new methods that will keep them engaged in the learning process.

The EEA Panel did not have an opportunity to interview the junior members of the faculty privately; however, it is evident that the current teaching loads do not allow for any mentoring that would enhance the research productivity of the future leaders of the programme. Currently, there is little opportunity for sabbatical leaves, visits to other Institutions, and travel to conferences. The PSP would need to seek alternative sources of funding to make these opportunities available to junior faculty.

### III. Conclusions

The programme is substantially compliant regarding Principle 5. Some recommendations are made below that may enhance the programme's quality.

#### Panel Judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 5, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Reduce the course load to junior faculty to allow them to increase their research productivity.
- Provide the necessary mentoring to junior faculty by involving them in research projects and actively engaging them in the establishment and interfacing with the external advisory board.
- Consider adoption of modern teaching approaches, such as active learning, critical learning, etc.
- Consider adopting advanced methods for on-line instruction to improve student engagement. For instrumentation training, virtual reality and videos with detailed instructions for the use of equipment may also be valuable to offering a hands-on experience.

## **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 and the PSP have excellent and accessible infrastructure, aligning with their mission. The diverse faculty and specialized staff, ensures a well- rounded academic environment. Administrative support, facilitated by the Secretariat, streamlines postgraduate processes. Utilization of the University Library and an online learning management system enhances the learning experience. The Employment and Career Service (DASTA) effectively addresses students' career needs, considering diversity issues.

The academic unit provides the PSP fundamental facilities for conducting classes, yet the department's recent establishment accounts for the limited availability of laboratory infrastructure.

The programme offers essential services for living and personal students' development, such as career counselling, free medical healthcare, counselling and Psychosocial Support, and volunteer groups. Free transportation to and from

the campus is also available. All the aforementioned support services are detailed and easily accessed in the student guide, posted on the official website of the PSP. There are scholarships and awards for students, posted on the website of the DUTH Interconnection Office. Also, in case of financial hardship for a student, there is also the possibility to reduce fees. Furthermore, there is a tuition utilization plan, according to which fees are allocated for teaching, administrative, and technical staff at, travel expenses for research purposes, expenses for supplies, and for consumables.

## **II. Analysis**

The tuition fees are used to maintain and upgrade to some degree research equipment. The PSP's adaptability, evidenced by flexible teaching modes and a focus on student-centred learning, aligns with contemporary educational needs. While work placements and partnerships enhance the programme's practical aspects, a structured framework for students on placements could further enhance the experience. Tuition fees, scholarships, and partnerships contribute positively to the programme's financial sustainability. Resources and student support underscore the PSP's commitment to success.

## **III. Conclusions**

The PSP demonstrates a robust adherence to Principle 6, providing a high-quality education within budget constraints. The allocation of resources for learning and research reflects a commitment to continuous improvement.



### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Learning resources and student support</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no specific recommendations relative to Principle 6.

## **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 PSP in Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems has established a satisfactory procedure for the collection of data concerning the programme activities. The status of students, the effectiveness of teaching methods, the progression of the students through the programme, and the employment opportunities are continuously monitored. The data collection is accomplished using several information systems for electronic registration and evaluation. The data collection focuses on course/instructor evaluation by the students based on electronic questionnaires, a survey of equipment by the laboratory directors, the documentation of research projects by a central system, and the support services for the students by the General Counsel Office and student counselling services of DUTH. The electronic system supports the collection and analysis of data, and its dissemination to the faculty. Student satisfaction surveys are regularly conducted at the end of each semester. A thorough presentation of the data collected and analysed by the evaluation

system was made available to the EEA Panel.

The PSP has made an effort to stay in contact with the alumni of the programme in order to strengthen the ties among students, faculty and graduates, and to receive feedback for the programme. Recent graduates of the PSP have a high respect for the education they received and are enthusiastic about their potential involvement with the programme. The group of graduates interviewed by the EEA Panel indicated that they had only participated in one post-graduation survey, thus the PSP may benefit from following up with its graduates at five- and ten-year intervals.

## **II. Analysis**

Course/instructor evaluation is embraced by both the faculty and the students. However, the evaluation is conducted only at the end of the semester, which does not allow for immediate response to current issues. A mid-term evaluation may be valuable in providing short-term remedies and long-term modifications, especially when compared and contrasted to the final evaluation of the semester. Course evaluation results are not made available to the students. This is a deviation from International standards where the transparency of student feedback is used to demonstrate a programme's ability to respond to student concerns, and to continuously improve the educational process.

## **III. Conclusions**

The programme is fully compliant regarding Principle 7. Some recommendations are made below that may enhance the programme's quality.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 7: Information management</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 7, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Conduct mid-term course/instructor evaluations by the students and communicate the results to the students.
- Include recent graduates in the External Advisory Board, conduct additional surveys of graduates, and try to engage them in promoting the mission of the programme.
- Include the stakeholders of the programme in the formal information exchange and invite them to participate in the educational process.

## **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 about the Democritus University of Thrace, the Department and the PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems are available online. The University website is organised into 8 categories. The main tabs consist of the following:

- The University (includes the Quality Assurance Unit and the external evaluation reports).
- Studies, which include the PSP description, Erasmus and other study services
- Research
- Life (e-services, student welfare, student life)
- News (contacts, news).

The tab of the University's PSPs are grouped into Departments. The PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems has the following link: <http://tecr.fmenr.duth.gr/>. The English version of the PSP website is limited.

### **II. Analysis**

The departmental website offers sufficient information in Greek and is very limited in the English version. In the Greek version, most information covers institutional activities and the post-graduate programme outline, intended learning outcomes for every module, degree awarded, graduate employment perspectives, teaching-learning procedures used and announcements. It also covers basic information about e-services, academic calendar, teaching timetables, contacts and the list of professors with a link to their CVs. Contacts and the list of faculty with a link to their CVs is not homogenous, and most of them need to include a link to the Google Scholar, Web of Science, ORCID

and/or Scopus ID.

On the department website, there is information about infrastructure, research laboratories, and other information about the Department. Content is available both in Greek and English; however, a discrepancy is found in the information quantity. The release of all information is subject to a quality control of the Department OMEA, being responsible for the curation of the material. Social media profiles for the Department and the PSP still need to be set up. Active LinkedIn, YouTube, twitter and Facebook could raise the visibility of events, lectures and accomplishments of students and staff.

The EEA Panel encourages using virtual platforms/social media to enhance student participation and engagement. Inclusion of the Thesis project results on the PSP website would further enhance the visibility of the work accomplished. This will allow the students and other stakeholders to access efficiently both the academic and non-academic resources of the Programme and the University.

### III. Conclusions

Although the Department provides information about both teaching and departmental activities in Greek, the website could be more thorough and contain more content in English. The PSP website could have more marketing information about the programme's usefulness, job opportunities, and testimonies of Alumni.

#### Panel Judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 8, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Each Staff member of the PSP should include Google Scholar, Web of Science, ORCID and/or Scopus ID for on the webpage of the PSP. Homogenization is needed of all accessible information regarding faculty: education, published work, collaborations, research areas of interest.
- The PSP website should be further developed to promote the work of the students and faculty more adequately.
- Relevant information for prospective incoming ERASMUS+ students should be provided in the English version of the PSP website.

## **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 self-assessment of the programme is based on procedures and continuous improvement of the level of educational offerings along with supporting the learning environment, ensuring the current character of the programme, and the strategic goals of the Institution. Factors considered for the assessment include the student's workload, students' expectations, and the assessment of the students. Also, scientific and technological developments, societal and job market needs, as well as national, European, and international environmental policies are considered. The PSP Director collects information from the delivery of the programme along with scientific, technological, business, and societal developments.

The Director collects all requests for changes to the programme, such as changes to the course content, course schedule and calendar, faculty workload, proposals for new courses, etc. Using the student course/instructor evaluations along with requests related to suggested changes, a proposal is submitted to the Department

faculty assembly. The annual report is submitted to MODIP for review, and recommendations are shared with the Department general faculty assembly. Decisions for improvements are made at the end of the academic year and are implemented by the beginning of the following academic year.

## II. Analysis

Through the process of internal review and continuous improvement plan, the positive aspects of the programme are reinforced by adding new topics based on scientific developments. The collected information is analysed, and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up to date. There is a strategically designed consideration for improving courses using the course evaluations by students. Programme weaknesses are addressed when problems are identified in students' evaluations.

The PSP is reviewed and revised but without the direct involvement of students and other stakeholders. Extension of collaborations with International networks and further involvement in external activities such as conferences should be common practice.

Enrichment of learning materials could be more frequent. Remediation of knowledge gaps of the students was achieved through special seminars, extended office hours for the faculty to assist students, and the availability of the academic advisor.

## III. Conclusions

The self-assessment procedure of the programme is adequate but should include more active participation of the students and of the external stakeholders.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 9, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The students' participation and the involvement of external stakeholders in the study programme revisions should be considered.



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

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

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

### **Documentation**

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

### **Study Programme Compliance**

#### **I. Findings**

The PSP Conservation and Restoration of Natural Terrestrial Ecosystems does not have an external evaluation. Following the instructions of HAHE to this Principle, the EEAP utilised the IQAS Accreditation Report (2018) of the Democritus University of Thrace and the 2016 external evaluation. The PSP provided a detailed response about the previous external evaluations and the Programme has taken into consideration those relevant recommendations and is willing to proceed with the implementation of all recommendations for the PSP.

#### **II. Analysis**

Some recommendations from the previous external evaluations were not fully implemented. A point-by-point response to the previous evaluations and a time schedule about when they will be fulfilled should also be mentioned. The recommendation for improving the English version of the website was not sufficiently implemented. The use of English in teaching and research seminars is not yet fully embraced. The active participation of the students and external stakeholders towards improving the educational processes has not been implemented.

#### **III. Conclusions**

The recommendations from the previous external evaluations were considered, but not fully implemented.

### **Panel Judgement**

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

### **Panel Recommendations**

To further enhance adherence to Principle 10, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The Programme should materialize the recommendations of the University IQAS Accreditation Report.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

## **I. Features of Good Practice**

- The PSP has the necessary procedures for monitoring quality assurance and aligns with the strategic objectives of the Department and the University.
- The faculty and staff are enthusiastic and dedicated to their mission.
- The students' overall experience is very positive. The enthusiasm of current students, recent graduates, employers, and stakeholders was evident.
- Employment of the postgraduate study programme graduates in public and/or private positions is very high.
- Employers and social partners praised the postgraduate study programme and believe there is a clear need for such graduates.

## **II. Areas of Weakness**

- There is no structured, well-defined involvement of students, graduates and external stakeholders' in the PSP improvement.
- There are limited interactions with stakeholders and alumni after graduation.
- Limited mobility of students, faculty, and other scientific personnel.

## **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

- Establish a formal process for the active participation of students, graduates, external stakeholders in the curriculum development and study programme revisions.
- The PSP website should be enhanced in order to promote the work of the students and faculty more adequately. Each teaching and research staff member of the PSP should include Google Scholar, Web of Science, ORCID, and/or Scopus ID on the webpage of the PSP. Relevant information in the English website version for prospective incoming ERASMUS+ students should be provided.
- Increase the number of targets set by the PSP and monitor on an annual basis.
- Consider student training in instrumentation.

- Increase interactions with stakeholders and PSP alumni.
- Consider organizing job fairs/workshops with potential employers and stakeholders for students to learn about job opportunities.
- Organize an Open House Day with the participation of all Department laboratories to showcase the range of research capabilities and on-going projects.
- Increase mobility of students, faculty, and other scientific personnel.
- Consider establishing a formal External Advisory Board comprised of faculty, graduates, and social partners to actively assist and guide the continuous review, revision, and further development of the PSP curriculum, enhance the entire programme, as well as attract external resources.

#### **IV. Summary & Overall Assessment**

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 5, and 8.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None.**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

**None.**

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

**Name and Surname**

**Signature**

**1. PAVLOSTATHIS SPYROS (Chair)**

School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology

**2. KATOPODES NIKOLAOS**

University of Michigan

**3. PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS**

Universidade do Algarve

**4. MOURKAS**

**KONSTANTINOS**

University of Patras