



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
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Accreditation Report **for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:**

LL.M. in International Studies

Department: Law School

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 30 November 2024



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
Κοινωνική Συνοχή



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of
the New Postgraduate Study Programme **LL.M. in International Studies**
of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting
accreditation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile	6
Part B: Compliance with the Principles.....	7
Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes	7
Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes.....	13
Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification	16
Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	19
Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support	21
Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	25
Part C: Conclusions	28
I. Features of Good Practice.....	28
II. Areas of Weakness.....	28
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions.....	28
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	30

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new postgraduate study programme of **LL.M. in International Studies** 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. Prof. Nikitas Hatzimihail (Chair)**
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- 2. Prof. Efstathios Banakas**
University of East Anglia, United Kingdom
- 3. Prof. Nicholas Tsagourias**
University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
- 4. Prof. Sophie Papaefthymiou**
Institute for Political Science in Lyons, France
- 5. Mr. Papadopoulos Fotios**
University of the Peloponnese, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Panel consisted of Professor Emeritus Efstathios Banakas (University of East Anglia), Professor Sophie Papaefthymiou (SciencesPo, Lyon), Professor Nicholas Tsagourias (University of Sheffield), Dr Fotios Papadopoulos (Post-doctoral researcher, University of the Peloponnese) and Professor Nikitas Hatzimihail (University of Cyprus; chair).

The working sessions of the review took place online on a single day, Tuesday 26 November followed by private deliberations of the Panel in the coming days. There was no visit in person, but a video presentation of the premises and facilities was offered. Since this is a new programme there were no meetings with existing students and/or alumni, however some of the stakeholders had previously studied in the preceding PSP and were able to provide a useful perspective. The Panel sought to optimize meeting and discussion time, eschewing breaks insofar as possible and the Unit's responsible did oblige the Panel by being available and engaging in real discussion.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The LLM in International Studies is a newly established postgraduate study programme (PSP) offered by the Department of Law at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). It reflects the Institution's strategic objective to foster excellence in education and research, meet evolving societal needs, and enhance its international profile. The programme is designed to address the increasing demand for specialized knowledge in international law, human rights, and global governance. It offers two distinct streams of specialization: a) Private International Law, b) International and European Human Rights and Refugee Law. The academic remit emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, combining legal theory with practical applications. The courses integrate contemporary developments in international law and policy, preparing graduates for diverse professional environments such as law firms, government agencies, international organizations, and academia. Concerning its duration and structure, the programme spans three semesters (1.5 academic years), with the first two semesters dedicated to coursework and the third semester focusing on the completion of a thesis. The curriculum follows the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), with a total workload of 90 ECTS: 60 ECTS: Coursework, 30 ECTS: Thesis.

A hybrid teaching model is employed, combining 20% face-to-face learning and 80% distance learning, leveraging modern e-learning technologies to enhance flexibility and accessibility. Graduates are awarded a Master of Laws (LLM) in International Studies, a Level 7 qualification under the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This certification attests to their advanced expertise and readiness for both professional practice and further academic pursuits. Regarding the employment opportunities, the programme equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary for careers in the following domains:

1. Legal Practice: Specialization in human rights and refugee law, aligning with the needs of legal professionals.
2. Diplomacy and Public Service: Training for positions in ministries, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and international agencies.
3. Military and Security Services: Expertise in International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, benefiting defence personnel.
4. Academia and Research: Preparation for doctoral studies or positions in academic institutions.

As a new programme, challenges include ensuring effective student engagement in the hybrid model and fostering international collaborations to attract a diverse student body. To address these, DUTH has implemented a robust Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) to monitor and improve the programme continuously. The use of English as the medium of instruction for the Public International Law stream enhances the programme's global orientation, making it accessible to international students. The design of the programme aligns with national and international quality standards, ensuring its competitiveness and relevance in the academic and professional spheres. This profile underscores the LLM in International Studies as a forward-thinking, interdisciplinary programme designed to meet contemporary global challenges while maintaining academic excellence.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

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

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE PSP OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

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

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

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

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit for postgraduate study programmes should be in line with the Institution's strategy and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the postgraduate study programmes offered by the academic unit. Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

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

- a. the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes*
- b. the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7*
- c. the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP*

- d. the appropriateness of the qualifications and the availability of the teaching staff for the PSP*
- e. the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP*
- f. the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labour market*
- g. the quality of support services, such as administrative services, the libraries, and the student welfare office for the PSP*
- h. the efficient utilisation of the financial resources of the PSP that may be drawn from tuition fees*
- i. the conduct of an annual internal review and audit of the quality assurance system for the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Postgraduate Studies Programme (PSP) "LL.M. in International Studies" is part of the strategic planning of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), which aims to promote knowledge, the development of research and the arts, the satisfaction of the educational, research, social, cultural and development needs of the country, the high level specialization of graduates in theoretical and applied areas of specific disciplines.

The PSP is committed to the implementation of a quality policy that supports the academic character and orientation of the programme of study, promotes its purpose and subject matter, implements its strategic objectives, defines the means and ways of achieving them and aims at its continuous improvement.

The Institution's strategy for the development of postgraduate programmes

The PSP programmes organised by the DUTH aim to promote original scientific research and to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge, at least in one scientific discipline. In addition to deepening knowledge, promoting research and specialization, they encourage and promote the cross-cutting skills of students, support interdisciplinarity through collaboration Departments, but also aim to enhance extroversion through the establishment of joint programmes with recognized institutions and institutions in Greece and abroad.

Through its PSP courses the DUTH aims at:

- the provision of all the knowledge, skills and abilities required in the cognitive subjects treated in all the faculties of the DUTH, in order for their graduates to have a successful career,
- training young scientists in a wide range of scientific fields,
- the training of young executives and professionals in fields that are essential for local and national development by supporting businesses, organisations and the economy and society in general,
- supporting research, both basic and applied.
- excellence in postgraduate education, learning, teaching, research and innovation, as well as the support and utilisation of established and young researchers, academic teachers and administrative staff, who are distinguished for their scientific interest and ethics, their professional commitment and consistency and who develop significant scientific activity,
- in providing the knowledge, competences and skills required for studies at doctoral level.
- to contribute, through knowledge, innovation, scientific thought and creation, to the extent appropriate to the well-being, social progress and culture of the national, European and international academic world.

In order to achieve the above, DUTH develops specific actions, having studied its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats it faces from its external environment.

E-learning strategy

The Regulation for Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies of the Democritus University of Thrace (Government Gazette 4751/20-08-2024 - Appendix 5), provides a pedagogical framework for the design and implementation of activities with distance education methods and evaluation of students, as well as analytical methods of distance education.

The regulation describes in detail the requirements for the design of distance education, the modules of which the respective postgraduate courses should consist, as well as the supporting material of an e-course. The systems and digital tools available at the DUTH for both synchronous and asynchronous distance learning are analysed, as well as the procedures to be followed for the establishment of a master's degree programme organised by distance learning methods. The present MSc will be conducted up to 80% by distance learning methods. The Department of Law has the appropriate infrastructure to support distance learning as it has certified videoconferencing rooms and licences to use appropriate videoconferencing - tele-education software. Also, the offices of all lecturers are equipped with the appropriate material for conducting distance education (e.g. computer, camera, microphone, speakers, etc.). Teaching in this MSc is to be carried out using the methods of face-to-face teaching and hybrid modern teaching. Hybrid synchronous teaching will consist of teaching which will be carried out simultaneously at a distance and in the physical presence of those students who wish to do so. The hybrid teaching will take place at the premises of the Faculty of Law of DUTH. The exclusive face-to-face teaching amounts to 20% of the scheduled teaching hours and the distance teaching (which will be shown from a room of the

University and can be attended on a voluntary basis with physical presence by those students who wish to do so) amounts to 80% of the scheduled teaching hours.

Quality Policy of the academic unit for programmes

The PSP "LL.M. in International Studies" is part of the strategic planning of DUTH, described above. The PSP is committed to the implementation of a quality policy that supports the academic character and orientation of the programme of study, promotes its purpose and subject matter, implements its strategic objectives, defines the means and ways of achieving them and aims at its continuous improvement.

The PSP It designs, modifies and improves its Curriculum in a transparent manner and with the participation of all stakeholders, in order to meet modern scientific requirements and teaching needs, and achieve the learning outcomes and qualifications as described in the course outlines of the Curriculum and offer qualifications in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education; promote scientific knowledge and research. It applies quality procedures in full alignment with the quality policy of the Department and the Institution in the teaching work, selecting the appropriate teachers in accordance with the relevant legislation. It evaluates the teaching work of the students on a semesterly basis, and utilizing a variety of teaching methods and techniques, with emphasis on student-centred processes and methods, encouraging every student to write articles, publish in reputable medical journals and presentations in national or international conferences. It ensures learning resources are useful and accessible to students, providing an Academic Advisor of Studies and cultivating a climate of respect, cooperation, understanding and inclusiveness among all those involved in the Programme of Studies. The PSP ensures the quality (and quantity) of the research work of the members of the academic unit, strengthening its extroversion with synergies both within the institution and with other institutions in Greece and abroad. It encourages faculty participation in international and national conferences, research projects and international collaborations, supporting their international mobility. It seeks alternative sources of funding (participation in projects, sponsorships, donations, etc.) It encourages high quality research, published and internationally recognised and ensures that teaching is linked to research.

The PSP has posted its Quality Assurance Policy of the Curriculum on its website and communicates it in every way to all parties involved and ensures the updating of the website of the PSP in order for it to be a constantly valid source of information for students.

Planning of objectives and actions of the PSP

For the planning of actions, the PSP has drawn up a quality target, according to the model of the HAHE, which includes strategic objectives, with the corresponding quality objectives, the required actions, the persons responsible for their implementation and the corresponding timetable.

Ways of communicating the Quality Policy

The PSP in International Studies has posted its quality policy on its website (Postgraduate Programmes | Department of Law (duth.gr), so that new and current students can be informed. Newly admitted students are also informed of the Programme's quality policy during the reception ceremonies for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The quality policy is also communicated in its contacts with the local community and chambers of commerce and economics, in cases of organizing activities with professional bodies, in the presentation of research results. The interface with the local society is close, as the subject matter of the PSP touches on aspects of state organization and cooperation with international organizations and institutions. Thus, its research results are communicated to institutions of central public administration and local government (particularly with regard to issues of migration policy, cross-border cooperation in the administration of justice, implementation of international conventions, etc.), but also to non-governmental organisations actively involved in this scientific field. Brochures are also distributed to students and other participants in all academic events of the PSP in International Studies and the Department of Law, as well as in the scientific events of the student association. All the printed material is also available in digital form on the website of the PSP in International Studies and is available at the Department's secretariat. Finally, information on events and research activities of the department is available on the department's notice boards and in the student reception area outside the secretariat of the PSP in International Studies.

II. Analysis

Our findings presented in detail in the previous section, are based on the detailed documentation provided online by the Unit and Institution, the Institution's accreditation proposal and the meetings and interviews with Staff and stakeholders organised for us by the Institution. These findings show that the present PSP complies with the requirement that Institutions (Universities), should have included in their strategy the development, organisation and implementation of new postgraduate study programmes (PSPs), in specific scientific fields, after having investigated their feasibility and viability, and that a quality policy should be developed and specialised (with the participation of external stakeholders) in the institution's and the academic unit's programmes, which, furthermore, should be made public and be implemented by all stakeholders. We found that there is a vigorous provision of rules and mechanisms to implement the strategy of the programme, and assure internal quality control and communication, both internally and externally, of the policy of the programme, and indicators of its success.

III. Conclusions

For the reasons stated in the section above, we are satisfied that the PSP in International Studies fully complies with Principle 1.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

We did not identify any obvious issues of concern in this section.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

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

The academic units develop their postgraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the research character, the scientific objectives, the specific subject areas, the specialisations, the expected learning outcomes, the structure, the courses, the teaching and assessment modes, the teaching staff and the necessary resources are described at this stage.

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

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

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The process of developing this programme follows established procedures and complies with the School's and the University's policies and regulations. The design, academic profile, content, learning objectives and delivery modes of the programme are appropriate. The expected learning outcomes are aligned with the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF), and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. The programme as well as individual courses seek to deepen students' knowledge. There is evidence of intertwining teaching and research. There is a quality assurance policy and an international strategy. The attainment of the expected learning outcomes or the general objectives of the programme are mainly gauged through on-going and final assessment as well feedback by students and graduates.

II. Analysis

The process of designing and setting out the content, learning outcomes and delivery modes of the programme are well-structured and comply with the School's and University's policies and regulations. The offered courses fall within the subject-matter of the two streams, but they are quite limited and do not allow for optionality. Also, they do not correspond to the title of the programme which is more general. Since the programme's focus is legal, this should be reflected also in the title. If the current title is maintained, more international law courses should be offered as well as courses from international relations. The programme can thus become interdisciplinary. The programme spans over three semesters with the final semester dedicated to the writing of the dissertation. There is no course however on research methods which will be useful for all student since they will come from diverse backgrounds, but it will also be necessary for writing the dissertation. Such a course will also chime well with the student-centred character of the programme. The research methods course can be offered primarily in the third semester or alternatively in the second semester. If the option of submitting the dissertation at the end of the second semester is offered, this may have implications regarding the length of the dissertation as well as raise questions of fairness. External stakeholders were very supportive, but they did not play an active role in the design of the programme and there is no information as to whether they will participate in the delivery, development or revision of the programme. The programme wants to establish links with the labour market but does not offer or require internships. Even if its targeted audience is professionals, this is an issue which needs to be considered for purposes of equality and inclusion unless it is offered as a professional programme in which case its layout and aims will change. The programme is very much knowledge based but it should place equal emphasis on skills development.

III. Conclusions

The programme complies with certain aspects of this principle, but more thought should be given to certain other aspects, including the title of the programme (which could be made to better describe the orientation), the number and subject- matter of the offered courses, the length of the dissertation, offering a module on research methods; the integration of external

stakeholders in the delivery or revision of the programme, the introduction of a process for regularly updating the content of the programme to include new knowledge and link it to market needs; ensuring as far as possible practical experience or internships, include the acquisition or development of transferable skills as part of the delivery and assessment of the programme; finally, ensuring that the whole programme and its delivery caters for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R2.1 reconsider the title of the programme, the number and subject-matter of the offered courses.

R2.2 integrate external stakeholders in the delivery or revision of the programme.

R2.3 introduce a process for regularly updating the content of the programme to include new knowledge and link it to market needs.

R2.4 offer a module on research methods.

R2.5 reconsider the length of the dissertation.

R2.6 ensure as far as possible practical experience or internships.

R2.7 include the acquisition or development of transferable skills as part of the delivery and assessment of the programme.

R2.8 ensure that the whole programme and its delivery caters for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification

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

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

Indicatively:

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The programme has established a structured framework for student admission, academic progression, recognition of prior learning, and certification that adheres to national and European standards. The programme implements a meritocratic and transparent admissions process. Applicants are assessed based on academic qualifications, professional experience, and motivation. Additional provisions ensure inclusivity, welcoming candidates from diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Applicants are evaluated on academic qualifications (e.g., first degree in law or related fields), professional experience, language proficiency, and motivation allowing for a holistic assessment of each applicant's readiness and motivation to pursue the degree. The programme effectively uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), allocating 90 ECTS across coursework (60 ECTS) and the thesis component (30 ECTS). This distribution aligns with standard postgraduate workloads, ensuring a balanced academic journey.

Student progression is monitored through regular assessments, including assignments, written examinations, and presentations. These evaluation mechanisms are clearly outlined in the syllabi, ensuring transparency and alignment with learning outcomes. Each student is assigned an Academic Advisor, responsible for guiding their academic trajectory, addressing challenges, and ensuring they meet their academic goals within the stipulated timeframe. The adoption of English as the language of instruction for the 'Public International Law' stream enhances the programme's accessibility to international students and supports its strategic goal of internationalization. The programme, offered primarily through a hybrid learning model (20% in-person, 80% distance learning), has established key regulations for e-learning. Courses are designed with a blended approach, combining asynchronous lectures, live sessions, and interactive activities. A variety of teaching methods is employed, including lectures, case studies, and problem-based learning.

Nevertheless, the absence of a Thesis Handbook was identified. Although the programme outlines the basic requirements for the thesis, the lack of a detailed handbook leaves room for ambiguity regarding quality standards, methodologies, and evaluation criteria.

II. Analysis

The programme's regulations for admission, progression, recognition, and certification align with both national and European standards, ensuring a fair, transparent, and meritocratic approach. The structured allocation of ECTS reflects rational academic planning, balancing workload and learning objectives. However, the absence of a Thesis Handbook presents a potential gap. A comprehensive handbook would:

1. Provide clear guidance on thesis requirements, including formatting, methodologies, research ethics, and quality expectations.
2. Standardize the evaluation process, ensuring consistency and fairness.
3. Support students and supervisors in navigating the research and writing process effectively.

III. Conclusions

The programme fully aligns with the Principle 3, providing a robust framework for admission, progression, recognition, and certification. Addressing the identified gap related to the Thesis Handbook would further strengthen compliance and improve the overall student experience.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R3.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive Thesis Handbook, detailing methodological expectations, research ethics, and assessment criteria.

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Law follows the University policies regarding staff recruitment. The aim of the Department is to recruit high qualified staff and also involve in the delivery of the programme external stakeholders (academics and professionals). Excellent teaching is recognised by the institution of a teaching prize. Teaching is supported and promoted by the Centre for the support of teaching and learning. The Department has provisions for study leave and conference attendance. There is provision for staff mobility.

II. Analysis

The recruitment process is competitive and ensures fairness and transparency. The Department's policy to attract highly qualified staff and involve external stakeholders in the programme is laudable and will diversity but also enhance and enrich student experience. Existing faculty have expertise in international law (public and private). They are all well qualified. They are active researchers, have an international profile and are enthusiastic teachers. The new openings will increase capacity and also allow the enrichment of the content of the programme. They will also improve the staff-student ratio in particular if the programme expands.

III. Conclusions

The Department and staff have the capacity, knowledge, experience and commitment to deliver this programme. There are policies for recruitment, teaching training, research, and staff recognition. There is a collaborative and collegiate environment which will ensure the successful delivery of the programme.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R4.1. Increase human and subject-matter capacity by recruiting more staff if conditions permit.

R4.2 Involve external stakeholders and diversify the way they are involved for example through bootcamps, mootings etc.

R4.3 Intensify staff training in teaching and learning through compulsory courses.

R4.4 Intensify efforts for attracting external funding in teaching and research, especially through international and European projects.

R4.5 Intensify efforts and support for high-quality research and outputs

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THEY SHOULD -ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND- ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Institution has Postgraduate Student Support Services both to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and to promote research. All services are staffed with specialised support and administrative personnel. The Central Library (<https://lib.duth.gr/>) is located in the city of Komotini. Due to the geographical dispersion of the University in four (4) cities of Thrace (Komotini, Xanthi, Alexandroupoli and Orestiada) the Central Library has developed nine (9) Library Units at the Department level. Students can search for material through the website of the Central Library (https://opac.seab.gr/search~S4*gre) and use the library loan services.

Electronic Secretariat of the Institution is accessible by the students through a personal code; it provides information about their study status and grades as well as course announcements and granting of certificates.

There is an electronic course support system (e-class) for each course (<https://eclass.duth.gr/>), accessible to registered students through a password. E- class contains supervisory material and announcements. A general bulletin board for educational topics and corresponding bulletin boards for each semester of study are available.

Philologus is an innovative service offered to all members of the Institution. Created by the Department of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and supported by the Laboratory of Linguistics of the Department of Greek Philology of the University of the Institution, it is aimed to provide linguistic proofreading and philological editing of texts written in Greek by members of the University Community. Under the supervision of the professors and collaborators of the Laboratory of Linguistics of the Department of Greek Philology, undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as graduates of the Department undertake the linguistic correction and philological editing of texts written in Greek (scientific papers, monographs, articles, etc.). The proposed corrections are indicated to the author so that they can be taken into account in the final formatting of the text. This service is offered free of charge; the names of the editors are mentioned in the acknowledgements of the published text.

The Institution provides additional digital facilities to graduate students, as an online account and an academic ID card.

Academic Advisory Services include an Academic Adviser, a Counselling and Psychosocial Support Department and an Accessibility Department. Counselling and psychosocial support services are provided for studies, academic and social life and other issues (psychosomatic disorders, emotional problems, addictions, etc.). Facility staff are bound by confidentiality.

Accessibility services ensure equal access to educational activities for all students; they support the use of electronic media for accessibility of textbooks, as well as of buildings and infrastructure.

The "Student Advocate" is meant to mediate between students and academic and administrative staff, to uphold legality in the context of academic freedom, to deal with phenomena of mismanagement and to safeguard the proper functioning of the Institution. The Student Advocate (a professor or Professor Emeritus of the Institution) is appointed by the Senate, following the opinion of the Student Affairs Council. He does not receive any remuneration. The findings of the Student Advocate, as well as a report on his/her annual activities, are published on the website of the Institution. Interested students of all levels may submit their applications, using the special form available on the website of the Institution by e-mail, in person or by post (anonymity is allowed). The Office is located in Komotini.

Through the Employment and Career Structure (DASTA) (<https://duth.gr/Services/Structures/Employment-and-Career-Structure>), students and new graduates are offered the opportunity to get to know the environment of their future professional career and to acquire the required knowledge and skills.

The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Service of the Institution (<https://epixeireite.duth.gr/>) aims to develop the entrepreneurial mindset and culture of students ; it supports: the introduction and teaching of entrepreneurship courses in various Departments ; the production of educational material (printed and electronic) for the promotion of employment prospects; the organization of visits to productive institutions. It is meant to make the Institution's research infrastructure and equipment accessible to the scientific community and to the "wider productive ecosystem" of the country.

Information about scholarships offered by various foundations advertised throughout the year is posted on the website of the Institution's Liaison Office (<https://career.duth.gr/portal/?q=scholarships/search>). The terms and conditions of the scholarships are defined in the Internal Regulations of the Postgraduate Programmes. The terms and conditions for granting scholarships of the Institution are defined in the "DEMOCRITOS" Scholarship Regulations, approved by the Senate of the Institution (<https://rescom.duth.gr/el/scholarships-duth/>).

Graduate Student Support Services are evaluated by the Quality Assurance Unit of the Institution, which conducts opinion surveys, sent electronically to all members of the academic community. Participation is optional. The results are published on the website of the Unit (<https://modip.duth.gr/>).

The PSP has provided a Tuition fee plan. Resources include tuition fees (1800,00 EUR per student), donations, sponsorships, funds from research projects and programmes, the Institution's own resources and state budget or public investment programmes. The amount of 54.000, 00 EUR is announced as resulting from the tuition fees and also as "total" income. Expenses are detailed as follows: 1. Fees for administrative - technical support 3.000,00 EUR 2. Teaching staff fees EUR 24.000,00 3. Travel expenses EUR 2.000,00 4. Equipment and logistical infrastructure EUR 1680,00 5. Other operating expenditure EUR 4.600,00. Partial total (70%) EUR 35.280,00 6. Institutional operating costs (30%) ELKE 15.120,00 EUR Total 50.400,00 EUR.

II. Analysis

All services are supposed to satisfy the needs of the students and of the academic and administrative staff. Insofar as classes will be offered online up to 80 %, access to all electronic resources and inter-library loan are necessary.

Philologus is a very helpful innovation of the Institution. The Panel has not received information on the number and type of scholarships offered per year. Regarding the resources, it is striking that, although several resources are announced, the amount of 54.000 euros corresponds both to the tuition fees (apparently there is information about 30 prospective students during the next academic year) and the total income. The Panel would appreciate better information about the amount corresponding to teaching staff fees, provided it is an additional salary, the number of teachers is very low, and there is no information on guest professors.

III. Conclusions

The Programme fully complies with most aspects of Principle 5

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R5.1 The Programme should strive to expand its library and online resources, in matters of public and private international law.

R5.2 The Programme should make better use of and ensure inter-library loan.

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

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

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

The above comprise the assessment of:

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The LLM in International Studies is a new programme that has not yet commenced its operation. Consequently, no internal or external evaluations have taken place. However, the Democritus University of Thrace has established a robust Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) to ensure the programme's compliance with quality standards and facilitate effective auditing and evaluation processes once implemented. This comprehensive IQAS, managed by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) (MODIP), to oversee the auditing, internal evaluation, and external accreditation of postgraduate programmes. The IQAS ensures compliance with the principles of HAHE's Standards by systematically addressing curriculum design, teaching methodologies, student workload, learning environment, and stakeholder engagement. The QAU is responsible for monitoring the programme's adherence to these principles through

detailed protocols that include annual internal audits and preparation for external evaluations.

The afore-mentioned mechanisms are documented in the Institution's internal regulations, ensuring transparency and consistency. Furthermore, the Institution has outlined procedures for supporting external evaluations once the programme becomes operational. This includes engaging stakeholders, compiling documentation, and addressing feedback from external review panels. The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) has developed a structured plan to coordinate with HAHE and external experts, ensuring adherence to international best practices during the external evaluation phase. A critical component of the IQAS involves proactive communication with all parties concerned, including students, faculty, and external stakeholders. The Institution has committed to disseminating information regarding the programme's quality assurance processes through:

1. The Student Guide, which details the IQAS framework and the procedures for auditing and evaluation.
2. Regular updates and reports shared with the teaching staff and external collaborators to maintain alignment with quality standards and stakeholder expectations.

II. Analysis

The programme demonstrates strong potential for compliance with Principle 6 through the existence of a structured and comprehensive Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). While no evaluations have occurred to date, the institutional framework provides clear mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring the programme's quality.

Key strengths include:

1. **Proactive Planning:** The predefined procedures for auditing, internal evaluation, and external accreditation indicate the Institution's commitment to maintaining high-quality standards from the outset.
2. **Transparency and Communication:** The dissemination of IQAS procedures and evaluation plans through Institutional documentation fosters trust and alignment among all parties concerned.

III. Conclusions

Although the programme has not yet undergone internal or external evaluation, the Institution has established a robust Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) to monitor and enhance the programme's quality. The framework is comprehensive, ensuring compliance with HAHE's Standards and supporting the programme's continuous improvement.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R6.1 Ensure that the predefined IQAS procedures are fully implemented and regularly reviewed as the programme progresses.

R6.2 Develop a detailed timeline for conducting internal evaluations, including clear responsibilities for each stage of the process.

R6.3 Establish a structured feedback loop to incorporate findings from future evaluations into actionable improvements.

R6.4 Enhance communication with stakeholders by providing periodic updates on the programme's quality assurance initiatives and evaluation outcomes.

R6.5 Prepare for external evaluation by fostering collaborations with professional and academic experts to align with international best practices.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- A vigorous provision of rules and mechanisms to implement the strategy of the programme, and assure internal quality control and communication, both internally and externally, of the policy of the programme, and indicators of its success.
- The programme builds on the strengths and expertise of its existing teaching staff in a manner that could help it develop a niche and address both local/national needs as well as build an international reputation (especially on the public international / humanitarian law component)
- Institutional documentation outlines a fair, meritocratic, and transparent admissions process.
- Helping students and faculty with writing (the Philologus project) seems a helpful idea.
- The programme incorporates quality assurance mechanisms to monitor its effectiveness and relevance, including predefined protocols for internal and external evaluations once operational.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The curriculum for both tracks lacks methodological and theoretical modules, including any that could be of use to both tracks, such as a module on the theory of sources in international law, international institutions, or contemporary issues.
- A comprehensive student Handbook, notably regarding paper and dissertation writing, is lacking.
- Lack of information on the number and type of scholarships.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The PSP should

- introduce a process for regularly updating the content of the programme to include new knowledge and link it to market needs.
- integrate external stakeholders in the delivery or revision of the programme.
- reconsider the title of the programme, the number and subject-matter of the offered courses.
- offer a module on research methods.
- reconsider the length of the dissertation.
- ensure as far as possible practical experience or internships.
- include the acquisition or development of transferable skills as part of the delivery and assessment of the programme.
- ensure that the whole programme and its delivery caters for equality, diversity and inclusion.

- create a detailed student and especially Thesis Handbook outlining the expectations, methodologies, and assessment criteria for the thesis component.
- ensure inter-library loan.
- Introduce advanced modules in Public (and Private) International Law, including topics such as the theory of sources of international law, climate law, and other emerging areas.
- broaden partnerships with universities outside Greece to increase opportunities for student mobility and international exchange programmes.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1,3,4,5,6**

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

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

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

- 1. Prof. Nikitas Hatzimihail (Chair)**
- 2. Prof. Efstathios Banakas**
- 3. Prof. Nicholas Tsagourias**
- 4. Prof. Sophie Papaefthymiou**
- 5. Mr. Papadopoulos Fotios**
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