



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 211 1903 400 • E. secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

Accreditation Report for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

MSc in Food, Nutrition and Microbiome

Department: Medical School

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: October 2025



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 Postgraduate Study Programme of **MSc in Food, Nutrition and
Microbiome** 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.....	8
PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES.....	9
PRINCIPLE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND QUALITY GOAL SETTING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT	9
PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES.....	12
PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT.....	15
PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AND CERTIFICATION.	18
PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES	21
PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT.....	23
PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	25
PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES.....	29
PRINCIPLE 9: ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC INTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES	31
PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES	35
PART C: CONCLUSIONS	37
I. Features of Good Practice.....	37
II. Areas of Weakness.....	37
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions.....	38
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	40

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 **MSc in Food, Nutrition and Microbiome** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Law 4653/2020:

1. MITSIADIS THIMIOS (Chair)

Universität Zürich, Switzerland

2. KOKKALA IRENE

University of North Georgia

3. SILIKAS NIKOLAOS

University of Manchester

4. Soultanas Panagiotis

School of Chemistry, University of Nottingham

5. Παπαλουκά Χαρίκλεια

University of Patras

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) formed an external and independent panel of experts to assess the compliance of the study postgraduate programme of Food, Nutrition and Microbiome of the Medical School of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) in accordance with the HAHE Quality Assurance requirements (laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020). The assessment was conducted through document reviews and online interviews. The method followed was an evidence-based process centred on a sampling of the Department's activities, and it was aimed at evaluating the fulfilment of the HAHE requirements of the relevant Quality Standard of the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) and commenting on its compliance, effectiveness, and applicability for the scope of the requirements. The information provided by the Department was assumed to be factually correct. The entire evaluation and accreditation exercise was carried out remotely using the Zoom platform.

On Friday October 10, 2025, the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) received from HAHE the Accreditation support material from the HAHE Cloud Link, which contained the following:

1.MSc in Food, Nutrition and Microbiome of the University of Thrace, consisting of the documents:

A0. Contents

A1. Proposal of Academic Accreditation

A2. Quality Policy of Postgraduate Study Programme

A3. Quality Objectives of the Academic Unit for the Postgraduate programmes

A4. Senate Decision on the Establishment of PSP

A5. Study Guide

A6. Course Outline

A7. List of names of teaching staff

A8. Report of the internal evaluation

A9. Evaluation from students

A10. Regulation on complaints handling

A11. Operating rules of the academic adviser institution

A12. Internal rules of procedure of PSP

A13. Research ethics regulations

A14. Study Regulations

A15. Diploma Annex

A16. Summary report on teaching staff allowances

A17. Data reports from the Integrated System National Quality Information System (NQIS) for all the previous academic years

A18. External evaluation of the postgraduate programme

A19. Other documentation material

Any additional material requested by the EEAP was provided promptly by the PSP via email.

2. HAHE Material containing the following:

M6 Guidelines for the Members of the EAAP

ACRONYMS

European Qualification Framework

M1 Standards for Quality Accreditation of Postgraduate Study Programmes

M12 PMS Mapping Grid

M13 Accreditation Report Template

Guidelines for Accreditation

Accreditation Management System-Expert Manual

ΠΜΣ-nar-1.0.ppx

On Monday October 13, 2025, the EEAP members met remotely, from 15:00 to 16:00 (Athens's time) in view of getting to know each other and to establish a modus operandi regarding the exercise of accreditation. On the same day, the EEAP Review of the PSP study programme started formally via Zoom at 16:00 (Athens's time). In the first part of this virtual meeting (16:00-17:00), the Vice-Rector & MODIP President - Prof. Marirena Grigoriou, the Head of the Department - Prof. Professor Konstantinos Vadikolias, the Director of the PSP - Associate Professor Tsigalou Christina, the MODIP staff - Mrs. Styliani Gkavaki and the administrative staff member of PSP - Mr. Tsompanoudis Sotirios familiarized the panel with the department and gave an overview of the School's and PSP's origins, evolution and current status.

In the second part of the virtual meeting (17:00- 17:30) the members of the teaching staff of PSP Prof. Ioannis Kourkoutas, Prof. Evgenia Bezirtzoglou, Prof. Nena Evaggelia, Prof. Konstantinidis Theodoros, Prof. Alexiou Chatzaki Ekaterini talked about the facilities (classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities related to the PSP) to evaluate the adequacy of the facilities and learning resources for the successful provision of the PSP. During this session the Members of the EAAP met also the administrative staff member Mr. Tsompanoudis Sotirios. The day ended with a debrief meeting of the EAAP members discussing the impressions of the first day.

The second day, Tuesday October 2025, included interviews with the teaching staff, students, graduates, employers and social partners. From 15:00 to 15:45, the EEAP met with the teaching staff of the postgraduate study programme, Prof. Kourkoutas Ioannis, Prof. Bakouros Ioannis, Prof. Evgenia Bezirtzoglou, Prof. Tsakris Athanasios, Prof. Tsatsanis Christos, Prof. Alexiou Chatzaki Ekaterini, Prof. Voidarou Chrysoula, Dr. Stavropoulou Elisavet, Dr. Deligiannidou Eirini Georgia, Dr. Matthaios Papadimitriou-Olivgeris to discuss about the professional development opportunities, the mobility, the teaching methods, the

competence and the adequacy of the teaching staff, the link between teaching and research, the teaching staff's involvement in applied research, the projects and the research activities directly related to the programme. Also, possible areas of weakness were discussed.

Later, at 16:00 the EEAP met with five students of the PSP to discuss their satisfaction and their study experience.

At 17:30, the EEAP met with PSP graduates, Dr. Stefanis Christos, Agronomist, Audit of ISO 9001 and ISO 20000 Systems at «Theodynamics Company», Dr. Petropoulos Andreas - Developmental Pediatrician, Mr. Papadopoulos Panagiotis - Molecular Biologist and Medical Information Consultant at «Dimokritos Diagnostic Radiology Labs», Dr Tsirtsidis Vasileios - General Physician, and Mrs Chatelou Maria Anna - medical laboratory employee at «Dimokritos Diagnostic Radiology Labs» to discuss about their experience and their career path.

At 18:30, the EEAP met with employers and social partners of the PSP, Mr. Soukoulis Petros, Strategy Advisor SEEMS SA, Mr. Vavias Stavros - Owner of «AGROSIMVOULOS IKE», Mr. Ioannidis Georgios, CEO of «Dimokritos Diagnostic Radiology Labs», Ms. Sidira Marianthi - Product Quality Lifecycle Officer at Pharmathen, and Mr Nelios Grigoris - Quality Control Manager at MACEDONIAN THRACE BREWERY S.A. to discuss relations of the PSP with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.

Finally, after debriefing among EEAP members in private, at 20:00 the EEAP had a closure meeting with the Director of the PSP Assoc. Professor Tsigalou Christina, the Head of the Department Professor Konstantinos Vadikolias, Vice-Rector & MODIP President Prof. Marirena Grigoriou and MODIP staff Mrs. Styliani Gkavaki to discuss their major findings and recommendations.

During the following days (October 15 - 18 2025), the EEAP members had several Zoom meetings and wrote the first draft of the report.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The PSP “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” of the DUTH was established in 2020 and focuses on providing specialized knowledge provides knowledge in the field of Nutrition and Microbiome, while offering both scientific and professional knowledge to postgraduate students. The purpose of this master's program is to provide high-quality education to its graduates and researchers and striving to develop a creative environment for work, education and research. Graduates from departments of Medicine, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing, Biology, and other departments in the broad field of life sciences are accepted into the graduate program. The total number of credits (ECTS) required for the award of MSc is 90, and the total number of teaching staff is 53. Also, there are invited speakers from Greece or abroad. For the acquisition of the MSc, compulsory attendance and successful examination is required in all courses which are distributed in the first two semesters of study (30 ECTS respectively). During the third semester of studies, the successful completion and preparation of the postgraduate thesis, which is worth 30 ECTS credits. The fee is 1.000 € per semester (3.000 € in total). A total of 99 students were admitted to the master’s programme the academic year 2024-2025.

The School of Medicine is housed on the DUTH campus. DUTH operates within a broader academic environment that supports interdepartmental collaboration and innovation in health education. The institution enrolls several thousand students across multiple campuses in Northern Greece and is vital in advancing higher education in the region.

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 School of Medicine has established a specific quality assurance policy (QAP) for this PSP which is fully harmonized with that of the Institution. The QAP clearly defines the vision and mission of the School of Medicine for the PSP, explains the continuous evaluation and monitoring of the PSP with emphasis on continuous improvement in the pursue of excellence in teaching and research. This PSP aims to further promote knowledge, develop research and meet educational, social, cultural and development needs of the country, providing highly trained and

specialised graduates in theoretical and applied areas of food, nutrition and gut health.

The School of Medicine has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely performance indicators/goals regarding this PSP. Important performance indicators to achieve continuous improvement for this PSP is the frequent revision and upgrading of the curriculum, as well as teaching tools and resources, the connection with research, the synergies and interdisciplinarity, the emphasis on attracting external collaborators in the broader field of health sciences and the wider promotion of the School of Medicine nationally and internationally. These indicators are assessed appropriately to ensure its sustainability, the absorption of its graduates into the labour market, the contribution to research and the satisfaction of its students. Data from external and internal evaluations for this PSP, and for the School of Medicine, are available in the integrated national quality information system of the HAHE. Relevant staff are informed about the quality assurance procedures and actively participate to implement appropriate actions. However, this is an exclusively remotely delivered PSP and, in addition to certain benefits, this brings several challenges in ensuring and maintaining quality and continuous pursue of excellence. Absence of face-to-face interactions, reliance on student self-motivation, social isolation, personal distractions at home, difficulties in managing schedules, workloads and deadlines may be difficult without regular in-person classes, ensuring academic integrity and fairness etc. These issues are difficult to deal with remotely and some on-site delivery may be necessary to improve quality.

The QAP is communicated to the public through the PSP website at <https://med-duth-master-fnm.gr/> where the relevant pdf is uploaded. The PSP Committee, comprising the directors of different study programmes, the president and vice president of the School of Medicine, is responsible for the running of this PSP always through the approval of the School of Medicine general staff assembly. The specified learning outcomes of this PSP are appropriate for a level 7 study programme according to the European and national qualifications framework for higher education.

The PSP charges €3,000 (€1,000 per semester) tuition fees and given the immense popularity of this PSP with a relatively large number of students, significant funds are raised. The EEAP has been provided with a summary of income/expenditure for 2025.

II. Analysis

The School of Medicine has a QAP appropriate for this PSP which includes a clear commitment for its implementation with emphasis in the pursue of excellence through continuous annual evaluations and revisions/updates for any issues identified as well as for the incorporation of new scientific findings and developments into the curriculum. Although there are good links with industrial, social partners and stakeholders there does not seem to be an established process within the QAP to ensure continuous annual input from them in annual revisions/updates. This is a distinct disadvantage that needs to be addressed. There is no need for the creation of yet another board, instead stakeholders can be invited to participate and contribute to the scheduled annual PSP progress meetings of the

PSP steering committee. The same is true with graduates of this PSP who do not appear to have any input either. Perhaps past graduates can also be invited to participate and contribute to the scheduled annual PSP progress meetings of the PSP steering committee too.

The QAP indicates commitment of the PSP in the personal/professional development of the teaching staff but this seems to be rather theoretical with no evidence of structured procedures for staff personal development. The KEDISO of DUTH does provide relevant activities but these seem to be ad hoc with reliance on personal willingness to participate or not.

The EEAP was disappointed to see that only a small fraction of the income from tuition fees was used to directly support research activities and publications. The PSP should revise the use of financial resources from tuition fees to channel more funds directly into research activities by supporting not only consumables but the purchase of more advanced equipment within the School of Medicine that will further promote and facilitate increased research outputs. The commitment for the efficient use of financial resources from tuition fees should be made clear and emphasized in the QAP.

III. Conclusions

The infrastructure of DUTH and the School of Medicine to support this PSP is appropriate. The QAP shows a well-organised PSP pursuing clear learning outcomes and qualifications at level 7 in accordance with European and national qualifications framework for higher education. Implementation of the QAP will ensure quality and effectiveness of teaching and research, student well-being and quality administrative and infrastructure support services. There is high demand for this PSP and increased demand is forecasted for highly qualified nutritionists, medics and food scientists focusing on the microbiome and its crucial role in public health. For the above reasons this PSP is fully compliant with principle 1.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Ensure the active participation of external partners, stake holders and past graduates in annual PSP assessments/evaluations by the PSP steering committee.
- State clearer the commitment of the PSP in the efficient use of financial resources through the tuition fees and increase the financial contribution towards direct research activities.
- Provide a structured personal development plan for staff that participates in this PSP in collaboration with the KEDISO of DUTH.

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

This PSP has been designed and approved in compliance with the DUTH framework and followed appropriate legal approval processes. The structure of this PSP comprises three semesters of six months each. The first semester includes five courses (30 ECTS), the second semester six courses (30 ECTS) and the final semester is dedicated to the diploma thesis (30 ECTS). All courses are mandatory and are delivered in Greek with some seminars from international visiting lecturers delivered in English. The master diploma thesis can be written either in Greek or English.

The PSP has been in operation since the academic year 2020/21 with clear objectives to provide graduates highly knowledgeable and skilled on foodborne/nutritional diseases, the importance of the microbiome in personal and public health, to promote scientific knowledge and research in the above fields in order to facilitate improvements in public health and to provide a highly skilled pool of scientists that might consider continuing their studies at doctoral level. The curriculum entails a global approach exploring modern dietary models and their impact on health through the establishment of healthy microbiomes. This is a highly important and relevant topic because foodborne illnesses are the most widespread health problem worldwide.

Graduates from this PSP will have the knowledge and skills to be absorbed in a variety of different work environments with different ethical and legal demands such as the national health system, education, professional bodies, public health services and organisation, the public and private sectors.

A complete and detailed student guide has been provided and is uploaded on the PSP website <https://med-duth-master-fnm.gr/>. There seems to be good links between research and teaching with samples of research proposal titles from the academic years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 also uploaded on the PSP website. A teaching staff list including areas of specialisation and biographies as well as course outlines are available on the PSP website and in the documentation provided.

II. Analysis

This is a well-designed PSP with a clear structure dealing with an important fast developing scientific topic. It is designed to be delivered entirely remotely with some face-to-face interactions required during the diploma thesis in semester 3, especially with students electing to carry out research-based projects in the lab. Graduates with the specialised skills and knowledge from this PSP will be important for the national economy. Monitoring of the PSP graduates in the labour market is poor to non-existent. The PSP needs to monitor in more detail the absorption of its graduates in the labour market and to provide valid and up to date statistical data to assess its effectiveness. Although students provide feedback on teaching through the teaching questionnaires for each course there does not need to be significant input of students in the design and update of the course content.

The student workload appears to be in line with the European credit transfer and accumulation system for level 7-degree programmes.

The EEAP was impressed with the good links between teaching and research and would encourage the PSP to further foster and strengthen these links. During our discussions, the EEAP suggested more emphasis to be placed on the curriculum towards the microbiome by including topics such as the mouth microbiome which has direct influence on gut microbiome too. This can be done by moderating somehow topics on food and nutrition in favour of the microbiome.

The EEAP encouraged the PSP to start delivering more courses in English as this is the international language of science. A PSP delivered entirely or in parallel in English may attract international students with obvious benefits to the School of Medicine, the DUTH, and the wider national economy. This will of course be guided by market forces and international demand.

III. Conclusions

This is an established, well-organised and delivered, popular PSP that is in operation since 2020. It was designed based upon appropriate standards considering the importance, originality and societal needs. It was established and approved following the appropriate procedures. It provides high quality education on an important, fast developing modern topic. The structure of the programme is rational and clearly articulated with objectives serving the learning outcomes and PSP monitoring/revision processes appropriately explained. The PSP is fully compliant with principle 2, but some minor recommendations have been made to further improve in the pursue of excellence.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Provide statistical data for the absorption of the PSP graduates in the labour market.
- Include more courses on the microbiome e.g. the mouth microbiome.
- Start delivering more courses in English to attract more international students.

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 "Food, Nutrition and Microbiome" spans three academic semesters and is designed for graduate students in Medicine, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing, Biology, or other health and life sciences disciplines. The programme comprises a total of 14 compulsory courses. The first two semesters focus on theoretical courses, which are delivered remotely via Zoom, allowing students who are working to participate. The third semester is dedicated to the master's dissertation, which can be either research-based or a bibliographic/literature review. The dissertation

corresponds to 30 ECTS.

Assessment is structured as follows:

- Final examination (multiple-choice questions) at the end of each semester, accounting for 65% of the total grade
- Collaborative group project, contributing 5% of the total grade
- Master's dissertation, contributing 30% of the total grade

Student feedback is gathered through an anonymous online evaluation questionnaire. The teaching staff are supportive and responsive, ensuring students receive guidance when needed. The course content is regarded as engaging and understandable, and both current students and recent graduates have expressed high satisfaction with the quality of the training. Additionally, the programme provides students with an academic advisor to guide them throughout their studies.

II. Analysis

The curriculum of this PSP covers a broad range of topics addressing current issues in nutrition and the microbiome. All courses are conducted online, a feature that is highly appreciated by many working students. The courses are engaging and comprehensive, and the faculty and teaching staff are consistently available and willing to answer questions. However, the assessment is currently based solely on multiple-choice questions, and the programme does not require students to give presentations during the semesters. Detailed requirements and additional information about the PSP can be found in the study guide. The PSP's website provides information regarding the management of complaints and objections as well as the role and status of the academic advisor.

III. Conclusions

The curriculum of the PSP "Food, Nutrition and Microbiome" is largely aligned with the standards of HAHE and is of high quality. Overall, the EEAP finds that the programme is delivered in a student-centred learning environment that fosters mutual respect. The PSP is substantially compliant with Principle 3.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Assessment methods could be expanded to include short, critical-thinking questions to further develop students' analytical and evaluative skills.
- Student presentations should be incorporated into the curriculum, as they help develop essential communication, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.
- It would be helpful if the assessment methods were presented more clearly on the PSP's website, ensuring transparency and better student understanding.
- Since only a portion of students (50%) have completed the evaluation questionnaires, encouraging greater participation would be beneficial to involve students more fully in the decision-making process.

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 “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” PSP was launched in 2020. The programme currently involves 53 faculty members, primarily from the Medical School of DUTH, along with contributors from other Greek Institutions. Additionally, 20 invited speakers, both domestic and international, participate in the programme. In the 2024–2025 academic year, the PSP admitted 99 students, just below the maximum annual intake of 100 students. The programme requires a tuition fee of €3,000 for the full duration of studies, with a limited number of scholarships available for tuition exemptions, awarded based on academic excellence and financial need. Admissions are based on multiple criteria, including:

- Academic performance and study scores
- Research experience
- Two recommendation letters
- Foreign language qualifications
- Candidate interviews conducted by an established academic committee

Eligible candidates include medical doctors and graduates from other relevant fields, such as allied health professions. While the admission criteria are stated in the supporting documents, the selection process lacks full transparency, as the weight assigned to each criterion is not clearly specified.

The PSP has established procedures regarding degree requirements and study duration. Currently, the programme spans three semesters, which limits participation in mobility schemes such as Erasmus+ and Erasmus+ traineeships.

Nevertheless, students are actively encouraged to participate in international conferences and to write and publish review articles and meta-analyses. Courses are conducted remotely, which facilitates participation by students engaged in part-time or full-time employment, and mechanisms for supervision of research projects by academic staff are fully operational.

Feedback from current and postgraduate students has been overwhelmingly positive. Students highlighted the well-structured lectures, the programme's emphasis on the rapidly evolving field of the microbiome, and the high quality and accessibility of courses. Many students and graduates, particularly professional doctors and dietitians, reported that the PSP broadened their perspectives and introduced them to innovative approaches within their field, contributing significantly to both their professional and academic development.

II. Analysis

The PSP enables most students to secure specialised positions in the public or private sectors, while a smaller proportion pursue research- or academic-oriented careers. However, the current three-semester duration is relatively short for completing a research-based thesis and does not allow participation in Erasmus+ mobility programmes.

Most courses are delivered in Greek, which limits the programme's international reach. The PSP could be strengthened and made more globally competitive by offering all courses and seminars in English and encouraging students to write their master theses in English. Extending the programme's duration and establishing English as the primary language of instruction would create greater opportunities for international exchanges, research collaborations, and enhance graduates' employment prospects in Greece and abroad.

Furthermore, the PSP lacks a centralized bank of research topics to guide students in selecting their master thesis subjects. While the faculty actively encourages students to publish their work, and the programme provides financial support for publications, research-based master theses, and conference attendance, introducing student exchange opportunities would further enrich the academic experience and strengthen the programme's international profile.

III. Conclusions

The PSP focuses on nutrition and the microbiome, providing a high-quality, specialised programme. Both current and postgraduate students report highly positive experiences, highlighting satisfaction with teaching, mentorship, and programme organisation. The flexible structure and remote delivery of courses support participation by students who are working full-time, promoting professional development and lifelong learning. A current limitation is that the programme is not part of the Erasmus+ framework, which reduces opportunities

for student mobility, international academic exchange, and collaboration with European institutions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- It is recommended that PSP courses be delivered in English to increase the programme's international accessibility and enhance the global competence of students. Similarly, students should be encouraged to write their theses in English.
- It is recommended to actively involve alumni and external stakeholders in the periodic review of the PSP curriculum to gather feedback and insights based on their academic, professional, and industry experience.
- It is recommended to create an alumni section on the PSP's website, to systematically collect and present data on graduates' career paths and scientific activities. Outcomes through statistical analyses and performance indicators will provide valuable insights into employment rates, career progression, and research involvement. The alumni will also serve as a communication platform between graduates and the PSP and will foster networking opportunities.
- It is recommended to reduce the number of students admitted to the PSP to enhance teaching quality and foster more meaningful interaction between students and faculty. Additionally, this adjustment will give the opportunity to the students for oral presentations, which could be part of the student evaluation process.
- Extend the duration of the PSP from 3 to 5 semesters, without imposing any additional financial burden on students. This modification will enable the master thesis to span 2 semesters, offering students the opportunity to undertake a research-oriented project and gain enhanced practical experience in research laboratories. This will also facilitate the PSP's student mobility via Erasmus+ and Erasmus+ traineeships, thereby strengthening international collaboration, enhancing the PSP's visibility across Europe, and improving students' employability and research skills.

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” recruits a diverse range of staff from several scientific backgrounds that enhances the overall student experience. The School of Medicine employs transparent and merit-based procedures for recruiting teaching staff in its MSc “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” programme. Apart from the main academic staff that are employed full-time by the School of Medicine, the programme utilises visiting professors from across the world that deliver key lectures and special topic speakers that are mainly from non-academic establishments. There are some opportunities for staff development, including staff mobility, but these are not formalised. Some staff were able to spend time in other academic Institutes as part of their development, but it is not clear how this was available to everyone. There is no clear peer evaluation. There is emphasis on research and the committee was assured that all staff are involved in research and supervise the final master thesis project.

Teaching performance is evaluated through surveys. These are completed by students anonymously and are electronic evaluations of both courses and teaching staff. The feedback collected is shared with the teaching staff and reviewed by the

programme committee to support continuous improvement. These evaluations play a vital role in self-assessment and inform broader institutional development planning.

II. Analysis

The staff comes from several scientific backgrounds. The most common is the medical background but it includes area like biochemistry, biotechnology, microbiology, pharmacology etc. A profile of the teaching staff is maintained, detailing subject areas, types of employment relationships, institutional affiliations, departmental origins, and individual academic and professional accomplishments. The staff clearly holds the relevant experience and appropriate scientific qualifications, with a good record of publications in international journals and presentations at academic conferences.

III. Conclusions

The diverse range of staff is a positive area for the programme. It provides all the relevant information and helps attract students from a diverse background as well. Teaching is evaluated and there is evidence of faculty mobility although that should be further encouraged.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Introduce peer evaluation.
- Establish clear procedures for faculty mobility.
- Enrich the pool of visiting professors and attract new ones.
- Student surveys have low respond rate and that should increase significantly.
- Teacher profiles should be harmonised and be regularly updated.

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, 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 PSP “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” provides a satisfactory set of resources and infrastructures that serve the needs of students. The teaching areas are properly equipped, while access to electronic e-learning platforms, databases, as well as to the central library of DUTH is provided. There is sufficient information on the available student support services (administrative, academic, technical), including pastoral and wellbeing support. The administrative staff is considered satisfactory for the management of the PSP. The tuition utilization plan is clear and well-documented, including individual provisions for faculty and teaching staff fees, equipment, travel and other operational needs (e.g. technical support, equipment, operating expenses).

II. Analysis

Overall, the programme is well supported. Due to the hybrid nature of the PSP and

the fact that students study online and reside in several areas that can be quite distant from the University, they need access to local Institutes to complete a lab-based dissertation. The PSP seems to offer these options and has links with other Institutes and utilises the tuition fees to cover any consumables and/or access costs needed for these projects. There is clear IT support that assists with the setting up of teaching and exams that are all conducted online.

III. Conclusions

The PSP " Food, Nutrition and Microbiome" has all the required support for students. These include both infrastructure and relevant personnel. The use of tuition fees is transparent and indicative of a sustainable development.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Establish clear mechanisms in case of IT issues during exams for one or more students.
- Reward student excellence with prizes.
- Encourage in-person meeting for all students at least once a year.
- Consider divert some of the tuition fees from visiting teaching staff to faculty mobility.

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 has established documented and robust procedures for information management across most core operational areas, utilizing a comprehensive suite of centralized information systems and regular evaluation tools. The key findings regarding information management practices are: The academic unit actively collects data concerning the student body, teaching methods, student progression, and resources:

- **Student Body and Progression:** Data related to student enrolment, demographics (e.g., newly enrolled students), course grades, and the number of active students is formally recorded and monitored using the electronic secretariat information system (Universis). Student progression is tracked through grade registration, and criteria are established for non-progression, such as absences exceeding 40% of teaching hours or unjustified non-participation in educational work exceeding 60%.
- **Teaching methods and quality:** The PSP ensures the formal evaluation of teaching quality through the mandatory completion of electronic questionnaires by

- students. This educational work evaluation procedure is implemented on a six-monthly basis. Evaluation results are generally positive, showing an average score higher than 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, with students noting the effective use of new IT and communication technologies. Teaching documentation is also collected via descriptive forms for instructors and courses.

- Resources and support services: The institution collects, analyses, and monitors data related to the availability and accessibility of resources. Information regarding infrastructure (equipment, buildings, etc.) is gathered via records from section directors and the technical service. Key digital resources, such as the eClass e-learning platform and remote access to the library and databases, are documented and monitored. Student support services are tracked through specialized institutional structures, including the counselling and psychosocial support department and the student's advocate.

The collected information is formally integrated into the quality assurance cycle for improvement:

- Systematic analysis: There is an established procedure for the analysis of the collected information and the utilisation of the conclusions resulting from this analysis. This process is tied to the quality policy, which explicitly aims for continuous improvement and guides the coordinating committee in making recommendations for the quality upgrade of the curriculum.

- Internal communication and action: Instructors have access to the results of the student evaluations. The implementation of the six-monthly evaluation itself was a specific corrective action taken to address a recommendation regarding student participation in educational process improvement.

The primary shortfall in information management concerns post-graduation tracking: The academic unit lacks formal mechanisms for systematic tracking of graduates' employability and career paths. The institutional reports indicate that the procedures for tracking graduate careers and conducting a graduate absorption survey are marked as not tracked. Although the structure for employment and career offers support, the necessary data collection tools, such as graduate questionnaires or employer/partner questionnaires, are not confirmed to be in use.

II. Analysis

The PSP demonstrates a high degree of compliance regarding the collection, analysis, and utilisation of internal operational data, leveraging a comprehensive set of information systems and quality assurance tools. However, analysis reveals a significant critical gap in the collection of external longitudinal data concerning graduates, and a transparency issue regarding internal feedback.

The PSP utilizes multiple, integrated systems for managing core academic operations: data collection is centralised and robustly monitored. The electronic secretariat information system *Universis* formally records key metrics such as grades and the number of active students. Progression criteria are clearly defined, with data collected to enforce policies regarding absences exceeding 40% and decisions regarding the removal of postgraduate students due to insufficient progress (e.g., non-participation in educational work exceeding 60%). Enrolment metrics detail the composition of the student body (e.g., newly enrolled students).

The PSP employs a mandatory and regular procedure for gathering student feedback: the educational work evaluation is conducted via electronic questionnaires on a six-monthly basis. The results of this analysis show very positive ratings, with positive feedback on the use of new IT and communication technologies. Documentation is collected using didactic personnel and course descriptive forms. Procedures are established to collect information on infrastructure (equipment, buildings, etc.) through records maintained by the technical service and DUTH's directorate of technical projects. The status of resources, including adequate and modern premises and fully equipped laboratories for student exercises, is monitored and deemed satisfactory. Monitoring also extends to IT resources, including the eClass e-learning platform and tracking of remote access to the library and databases.

The findings confirm that the department adheres to the standard requiring data to be analysed and used for decision-making and improvement: A formal procedure for the analysis of the collected information and the utilisation of the conclusions is established. Analysis informs the quality policy, which aims at continuous improvement. The coordinating committee uses the analysis to recommend a quality upgrade of the curriculum and plan for its amendment. The implementation of the six-monthly student evaluation procedure was a direct corrective action taken to address a previous certification recommendation. The analysis of research output utilizes systematic reporting, detailing publications, hetero-citations, and h-index. Conclusions are drawn from these numerical outputs, showing increasing activity and demonstrating trends in the quality and quantity of research over a five-year period.

Two primary weaknesses impede full compliance with the standard's goals of comprehensive, accessible information management: The most significant deficiency is the absence of formal mechanisms for systematic tracking of graduates' employability and career paths. Reports explicitly confirm that procedures for tracking graduate careers and conducting a graduate absorption survey are not tracked. There is lack of use of graduate questionnaires or employer/partner questionnaires. This gap prevents the programme from obtaining reliable external data essential for evaluating its impact on the labour market and ensuring the curriculum remains relevant to professional outcomes. Despite the effective internal analysis of student satisfaction data, the final communication loop is broken: while instructors have access to the evaluation results, the quality reports consistently indicate that access to evaluation results by students is not provided.

III. Conclusions

Based on the comprehensive review of the information management practices of the PSP, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding its adherence to the standards for collecting, analysing, and using information for effective management:

Robustness in internal data collection and management. The PSP has established a high degree of compliance in managing internal academic and operational data:

established procedures and systems, regular quality monitoring, resource and support tracking.

Effective utilisation for continuous improvement. The data collected is systematically analysed and used to drive programme management and quality upgrade: a formal procedure for the analysis of the collected information and the utilisation of the conclusions is established, the evaluation results guide the coordinating committee in making recommendations for the quality upgrade of the curriculum and its amendment. The implementation of the six-monthly student evaluation was a specific corrective action taken to enhance the active participation of students towards improving the educational processes. Instructors have access to the results of the student evaluations, ensuring that staff are involved in interpreting feedback.

Despite the strong internal structure, two critical deficiencies compromise the overall integrity and transparency of the information management system: There is a significant and acknowledged absence of formal mechanisms for systematic tracking of graduates' employability and career paths. Key quality indicators, such as tracking graduate careers and conducting a graduate absorption survey, are not implemented. This prevents the programme from obtaining essential external validation data. There is a failure to fully close the feedback loop, as quality reports consistently confirm that access to evaluation results by students is not provided.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Establish formal procedures for tracking graduate employability.
- Implement and utilize questionnaires for employers/collaborating entities.
- Develop and actively maintain an alumni registry to facilitate contact, career feedback, and networking.

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

According to the detailed presentation, the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) in “Food, Nutrition and Microbiome” at DUTH is committed to providing public information through a dedicated website, social media channels (e.g., Facebook), and notices displayed at key Department locations, such as secretariats, lecture halls, and laboratories. DUTH and the PSP have developed a bilingual website for the programme, containing comprehensive information on the curriculum, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and graduate career prospects. The website is maintained under the oversight of the PSP, which is adequately staffed to ensure routine content updates, security checks, link verifications, and periodic policy reviews. Information regarding student accommodation is currently not available online. Additionally, electronic notifications are sent to students, faculty, and other interested parties to provide updates on key programme actions, important components, and supplementary academic activities.

II. Analysis

The EEAP noted that most information channels are effectively in place to serve students and graduates, as well as third parties, including Departments from other Universities, funding bodies, research Institutions, and partners from the food and pharmaceutical industries, in addition to the public. The PSP website (<https://med-duth-master-fnm.gr/>) is fully functional in both Greek and English, and provides comprehensive information on the programme's courses, learning objectives, available resources, faculty, and other essential matters.

A primary aim of the PSP is the generation of new knowledge through the promotion of high-quality basic and/or applied research. Accordingly, the website features significant publications, distinctions and awards, and details of the research projects undertaken by the PSP. Ongoing maintenance of the website is expected to further enhance the reliability of the information presented, ensuring that news and updates are shared accurately and in a timely manner.

III. Conclusions

Given that the PSP's website is fully functional in both Greek and English, the proposed means and procedures for publicly disseminating information on the PSP's activities are considered appropriate and satisfactory for prospective students, graduates, stakeholders, industry partners, and the public. Several recommendations are given below to further improve the PSP's website.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The PSP website is an essential tool for student's academic life, for supporting the admission of new students, and for showcasing faculty quality and research activities. It should, therefore, be designed and operated in a modern, aesthetic, user-friendly, and informative way, serving both students' needs and promoting faculty interaction with other academic and research institutions in Greece and abroad.
- The PSP should update the website regularly (e.g., weekly). The date of the last update must be clearly displayed on all web pages.
- Public information should be expanded by publishing metrics from Departmental and Institutional annual progress reports, as well as notes on planned and past social events, completed and ongoing research activities, and collaborations with research, industrial and societal partners.
- The CVs of the faculty and teaching staff on the PSP website should be presented in a uniform way (e.g., one-page CVs including email addresses, metrics such as Google Scholar and ORCID, a few selected publications, research interests, grants and academic distinctions).
- The success of graduates should be emphasized and widely promoted, especially via social and local media (TV, Press, etc.).
- The EEAP advises the PSP to make the website accessible to people with special needs or disabilities.
- The EEAP advises DUTH and the PSP to maintain only one active website of the PSP and to eliminate all older websites containing outdated or incorrect information (e.g., <https://www.archive.duth.gr/en/Education/PostGraduate-Studies/artmid/599/articleid/936>).
- The EEAP advises the PSP to create active alumni and social media pages on the PSP's website to better inform future applicants about the programme and to strengthen its presence in professional and scientific digital forums.

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

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

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

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date*
- b) the changing needs of society*
- c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies*
- d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students*
- e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP operates within the institutional internal quality assurance system (IQAS/ΕΣΔΠ) of the DUTH. The assessment process generates formal reports documenting adherence to quality objectives and responses to external reviews. The evaluation of teaching work by students is applied every semester (six-monthly basis). This addresses a specific recommendation from the IQAS certification review regarding the active participation of students in improving educational processes. The programme utilizes an annual student survey. The methodology for educational evaluation uses the ΜΟ.ΔΙ.Π. questionnaire, distributed electronically. A final detailed report depicting the research and educational work is prepared at the end of the coordinating committee's (CC)

two-year tenure, aimed explicitly at upgrading the studies. The monitoring procedures yielded findings related to educational quality and compliance with external recommendations: The results of the educational assessment show a very

positive image of the quality of education. The average rating derived from teaching evaluations is consistently higher than 4 (on a scale from 1 to 5).

The PSP compiles a progress report which documents specific taken to address recommendations from the DUTH external evaluation and the IQAS certification. To address the need for expanded international awareness and use of English, the programme implemented the operation of the PSP website with information and educational material in both Greek and English. Furthermore, the master's thesis can be written in Greek or English. The programme implemented a policy to grant scholarships (reciprocal or non-reciprocal) or excellence awards to postgraduate students based on objective academic criteria, such as peer review publications combined with overall grading. The programme strengthened cooperation by ensuring the participation of faculty members from other relevant departments of Universities both inside and outside Greece. This includes confirmed participation from international institutions (e.g., Harvard Medical School, Kyorin University School of Medicine) and other Greek institutions. The programme formally defined and applied the procedure for the evaluation of teaching work every semester. The findings and action plans resulting from self-assessment are formally recorded and communicated to relevant bodies: The systematic evaluation activities are documented using institutional tools, including electronic questionnaires and descriptive sheets facilitated by the integrated information system (ΟΠΣ) of ΜΟ.ΔΙ.Π. of DUTH. Data reports from the integrated national quality information system (ΟΠΕΣΠ) are also referenced. The CC draws up the final report (which includes proposed actions for upgrading the studies) and submits it to the relevant department. The CC then recommends its approval to the assembly of the department. The CC is specifically responsible for creating a plan for the amendment of the curriculum and recommending issues related to the quality upgrade of the curriculum to the assembly. The quality policy explicitly requires that the PSP communicates its quality assurance policy and any actions taken in the above context should be communicated to all parties concerned. Communication is achieved by actively posting the quality assurance policy of the PSP on its website.

II. Analysis

The analysis of the internal monitoring and evaluation processes of the PSP reveals a highly structured and effective internal quality assurance system. The summary of the analysis focuses on procedural effectiveness, specific assessment outcomes, implementation of quality actions, and transparency in communication. The PSP has a comprehensive system of review integrated into the IQAS of DUTH. The PSP uses both semi-annual and annual evaluation cycles for continuous improvement. The evaluation of teaching work is specifically applied every semester. An annual student survey is also used. Data collection is

frequent, culminating in a final detailed report detailing research and educational work at the end of the coordinating committee's two-year tenure.

Evaluation outcomes are formally recorded using institutional tools, including electronic questionnaires and descriptive sheets, facilitated by the ΟΠΣ of DUTH. Standardised reporting is also confirmed through references to data from the ΟΠΕΣΠ. This structured approach ensures that self-assessment procedures are

active and comply with continuous monitoring requirements.

A key finding from the systematic monitoring of teaching quality is a very positive image of the education delivered. This suggests a strong level of student satisfaction and successful educational provision. A core finding is the explicit confirmation that the self-assessment and monitoring process results in action plans that are subsequently implemented. The programme actively converts recommendations from external evaluations (DUTH external evaluation and ΕΣΔΠ certification report) into tangible actions.

Implemented actions address key areas: established a PSP website with material in both Greek and English and allowed the master's thesis to be written in Greek or English. Granted scholarships or excellence awards based on objective criteria, specifically publication (peer review) combined with overall grading. Ensured the participation of faculty members from other relevant departments of Universities both inside and outside Greece, including international experts. Implemented the formal procedure for the evaluation of teaching work every semester. These findings confirm the efficacy of the internal quality assurance mechanisms in driving change. The findings highlight a commitment to transparency regarding self-assessment outcomes and resulting actions. The quality policy mandates that any actions taken in the context of continuous improvement should be communicated to all parties concerned. The CC draws up the program report and recommends its approval to the assembly of the department. The CC is also responsible for creating a plan for the amendment of the curriculum. The PSP actively posts the quality assurance policy of the study programme on its website. The complaints management system ensures that findings regarding dissatisfaction can be escalated and discussed by the director with the academic advisor or other members of the teaching research Staff, thereby sharing necessary information within the faculty.

III. Conclusions

The PSP operates an effective and systematic internal quality assurance system that largely meets the objectives of ongoing monitoring, periodic internal review, amendment, and communication for continuous improvement. The PSP demonstrates a mature quality culture where monitoring, analysis, action planning, implementation, and communication are systematically interwoven to maintain and improve the educational provision and learning environment, meeting the core requirements of the review principle

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Maintain and promote the policy of granting excellence awards based on objective academic criteria.
- Formalise the process for generating and submitting a succinct annual review summary (covering progress, workload, completion rates, and curriculum alignment findings).
- Formalise a structured mechanism for soliciting feedback from non-academic stakeholders (e.g., relevant industry partners or professional bodies) during the preparation of the plan for the amendment of the curriculum.
- Continue the highly effective practice of documenting and communicating implemented actions, leveraging established formal channels, ensuring that the progress report detailing actions taken is widely accessible.

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

DUTH underwent an external evaluation in 2015, conducted by an external evaluation and accreditation panel (EEAP) that included an on-site visit to the Institution. This marks the first evaluation of the PSP by the Hellenic authority for higher education (HAHE). Throughout the current evaluation process, both the DUTH and PSP leadership demonstrated a high level of cooperation and professionalism, submitting a clear, comprehensive, and well-structured proposal accompanied by all required documentation. Discussions between the EEAP and the PSP confirmed that any recommendations arising from the evaluation will be treated with due consideration and effectively addressed by the relevant institutional bodies.

II. Analysis

In accordance with the legislation and the established quality assurance framework, the PSP undergoes periodic external evaluations conducted by EEAPs appointed by the HAHE. The external evaluation report is expected to include, among other elements, a set of recommendations formulated by the EEAP, based on the evaluation requirements and the criteria defined by HAHE.

During the current evaluation of the PSP, effective collaboration was achieved between the EEAP and the PSP, leading to a satisfactory and constructive conclusion. The process adopted by the PSP for implementing the EEAP's recommendations includes: a) dissemination of the EEAP's recommendations together with the full text of the external evaluation report, b) comprehensive analysis of the EEAP's recommendations, and c) continuous monitoring by the PSP's quality assurance unit to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in accordance with the established timeline.

The procedures for the present evaluation were clearly defined, and the PSP demonstrated a high level of cooperation, providing additional information and

documentation whenever requested. It is the opinion of the EEAP that all matters raised in the evaluation report will be appropriately addressed by the PSP, in close collaboration with the internal evaluation unit (MODIP). Such ongoing engagement and dialogue are expected to contribute significantly to the continuous improvement of the PSP.

III. Conclusions

As emphasised during the discussions of the EEAP with faculty members and administrators, the external evaluation procedures are highly valued by both DUTH and the PSP faculty. All internal evaluation units of DUTH (MODIP and OMEA) approach the external evaluation process diligence and professionalism, a commitment that is equally evident among the entire PSP faculty and DUTH's leadership.

Consequently, the EEAP concludes that DUTH and the PSP demonstrate a strong institutional commitment to thoroughly considering and effectively implementing the recommendations arising from the external evaluation process.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Set mechanisms to address any important issues of concern.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The PSP is highly important and strongly aligned with labour market needs
- The PSP is unique in Greece in the field of microbiota, offering distinctive specialisation
- The PSP's structure is well-designed and coherent, reflecting clear learning objectives
- The academic environment is well-established, fostering intellectual development and academic rigor
- The size of the faculty is satisfactory to meet the needs of the programme
- Faculty members and teaching staff are enthusiastic, experienced, and dedicated, demonstrating strong commitment to teaching and mentoring
- The PSP maintains important synergies with pioneer Institutions in Greece
- Mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate individual faculty members, ensuring quality
- The PSP benefits from continuous support from DUTH
- The programme enjoys efficient and supportive administrative services, ensuring smooth operation
- Postgraduates have expressed their satisfaction and enthusiasm for the PSP
- There are ongoing exchanges with pharmaceutical industry and other stakeholders, promoting applied learning and employability

II. Areas of Weakness

- Elevated number of students
- Most courses are delivered via Zoom, reducing in person interaction and engagement
- The PSP website is outdated and lacks modern design and content update
- Faculty and teaching staff CVs are not standardised or uniform
- Computing science lessons (e.g., artificial intelligence), and courses in ethics are missing
- Courses are delivered mostly in Greek, limiting international participation or exchanges
- Course assessments are exclusively via a final multiple choice remote exam
- Lack of a centralised bank of research topics for the PSP students
- A small percentage of the annual budget is allocated for research purposes
- Absence of modern teaching methodologies
- Absence of a robust process for the evaluation of students' progression
- Absence of an annual consultative board including postgraduates and external stakeholders

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Ensure the active participation of external partners, stakeholders, and alumni in annual PSP assessments and periodic curriculum reviews to integrate feedback from academia, industry, and the professional sector.
- Implement formal procedures for tracking graduate employability, supported by questionnaires for employers and collaborating entities.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive alumni registry and dedicated website section to collect and present data on graduates' career paths, research activities, and employment outcomes. Use these data to produce statistical analyses and performance indicators.
- Maintain and promote the policy of excellence awards based on objective academic criteria to recognise and reward student achievement.
- Formalise and document the process for generating and submitting annual review summaries, including progress, workload, completion rates, and curriculum alignment findings.
- Establish a structured mechanism for collecting feedback from non-academic stakeholders (e.g., industry and professional bodies) during curriculum updates.
- Continue the practice of documenting and communicating implemented actions, ensuring progress reports are accessible through formal channels.
- Establish clear procedures for faculty mobility, possibly redirecting a portion of tuition fees from visiting staff toward mobility support.
- Introduce peer evaluation for continuous improvement of teaching quality.
- Enrich and diversify the pool of visiting teaching staff by attracting new, qualified professionals.
- Encourage in-person student meetings at least once per year to strengthen community, collaboration, and engagement.
- Establish mechanisms to address major academic or administrative concerns efficiently and transparently.
- Expand the curriculum to include additional microbiome-related courses (e.g., oral microbiome) to broaden scientific coverage.
- Incorporate student presentations and critical-thinking exercises into assessments to foster communication, analytical, and teamwork skills.
- Diversify assessment methods by including short, open-ended questions and other formats beyond multiple choice, encouraging deeper learning and critical reasoning.
- Clarify assessment methods on the PSP website to ensure transparency and enhance student understanding.
- Encourage greater participation in course and programme evaluations to improve feedback quality and student engagement in decision-making.

- Reduce student intake to enhance teaching quality and allow for more personalised interaction and oral presentation opportunities.
- Extend the PSP duration from three to five semesters (without extra financial cost) to allow the master's thesis to span two semesters, promoting more research-oriented projects and laboratory experience. This will also enhance student mobility through Erasmus+ and strengthen international collaboration.
- Establish clear contingency procedures for IT-related issues during online examinations to ensure fairness and continuity.
- Deliver courses in English and encourage students to write their theses in English to improve international accessibility, attract foreign students, and enhance graduates' global competencies.
- Clearly communicate the PSP's commitment to efficient financial resource management, ensuring transparency in tuition fee allocation.
- Increase the financial contribution toward research activities to strengthen the programme's scientific output.
- Develop a structured personal and professional development plan for the faculty, in collaboration with KEDISO of DUTH.
- Develop and maintain a modern, accessible, and user-friendly PSP website that supports students, attracts applicants, and promotes collaboration with other Institutions.
- Regularly update the website (e.g., weekly) and clearly display the last update date on each page.
- Consolidate PSP web presence by maintaining only one active, official website and removing outdated or duplicate pages (e.g., the archived DUTH link).
- Expand public information by publishing departmental metrics, research activities, social events, and collaborations with academic, industrial, and societal partners.
- Present faculty profiles in a consistent format, including contact details, key publications, research interests, and links to Google Scholar and ORCID.
- Highlight and promote the success of graduates through the website and social/local media to enhance the PSP's reputation.
- Ensure the website's accessibility for individuals with disabilities, complying with accessibility standards.
- Create and maintain active alumni and social media pages to engage graduates, inform prospective students, and strengthen the PSP's visibility in academic and professional networks.
- Encourage active participation in evaluation questionnaires to involve students more effectively in continuous improvement.
- Reward academic excellence through merit-based prizes and recognition.
- Maintain clear communication channels and prompt resolution mechanisms for academic or administrative issues.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

3, 4, 8

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

none

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

none

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

MITSIADIS THIMIOS

Signed by MITSIADIS THIMIOS

KOKKALA IRENE

Signed by KOKKALA IRENE

SILIKAS NIKOLAOS

Signed by SILIKAS NIKOLAOS

Soultanas Panagiotis

Signed by Soultanas Panagiotis

Παπαλουκά Χαρίκλεια

Signed by Παπαλουκά Χαρίκλεια