



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
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Accreditation Report
for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:
Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected

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

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: May 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 Postgraduate Study Programme of **Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the postgraduate study programme of **Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. PAVLOSTATHIS SPYROS (Chair)

School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology

2. KADIS CONSTANTINOS

Frederick University

3. PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS

Universidade do Algarve

4. Γιωτόπουλος Γεώργιος

University of Patras

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the PSP Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas of the Democritus University of Thrace, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEA Panel) reviewed a multitude of materials provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices.

The programme review was conducted via teleconference, organized and coordinated by HAHE and the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). The schedule and agenda of the review were as stated below.

Monday, 13/05/2024:

- a) Preliminary private meeting of the EEA Panel. Discussion of the programme under review; assignment of writing parts of the draft accreditation report to the members of the EEA Panel.
- b) Welcome meeting and short overview of the two PSPs with the Head of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources Prof. G. Tsantopoulos, the Director of the PSP Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas (PSP1) Prof. K. Radoglou, the PSP1 Steering Committee member Prof. V. Dimou, the Director of the PSP Environmental Planning and Environmental Education (PSP2) Prof. G. Tsantopoulos, the PSP2 Steering Committee member Prof. Th. Katagis, the President of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) Prof. M. Grigoriou, the QAU staff Mrs. S. Gkavaki and Mrs. S. Marsidou, the PSP1 Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) members Profs. S. Galatsidas, M. Orfanoudakis, A. Symeonidis, and Special Technical and Laboratory Staff A. Symeonidis: Presentation of DUTH quality assurance policy, current status and future developments, as well as presentations and discussion of PSP1 and PSP2 history, academic profile, current status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern, degree compliance to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, etc.
Meeting with PSP1 & PSP2 teaching staff and administrative staff members: Discussion of facilities and learning resources. Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only).

Tuesday, 14/05/2024:

- a) Meeting and discussion with PSP1 Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas teaching staff members Profs. E. Milios, K. Kitikidou, G. Korakis, I. Gitas and researchers Mrs. M. Fotelli and Mr. N. Markos.
- b) Meeting and discussion with six (6) current PSP1 students.
- c) Meeting and discussion with six (6) recent PSP1 graduates.
- d) Meeting and discussion with employers and PSP1 social partners: Mr. S. Amoiras, Ena Development Consultants; Mr. N. Chlykas, NERCO-N Chlykas and Associates SA; Mr. S. Diamantopoulos, OMICRON Environmental Consultants SA; Mr. O. Giovanopoulos, Agroforestry Cooperation-General Partnership; and Mr. P. Mouchtarides, Chief Officer, Forest Service Xanthi.
- e) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only): Discussion of the outcomes and findings of the PSP1 virtual visit; preparation of oral report.

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

Wednesday, 15/05/2024:

Teleconference meetings related to PSP2 Environmental Planning and Environmental Education of the Democritus University of Thrace.

Thursday 16/05/2024 to Saturday 18/05/2024:

Draft report writing. EEA Panel virtual meetings. Review and finalization of PSP1 accreditation draft report.

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

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The postgraduate study programme (PSP) Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas is organized and offered by the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), located in Orestiada. The programme was initially established and started with the academic year 2022-2023 (Official Gazette 3141/B/22-06-2022).

The objective of the PSP is to provide advanced education and research in the technical area of recording and monitoring of forests and forest lands and protected natural areas. Specifically, it aims in the training of new specialized scientists for the staffing of private and public services with a focus on the use of advanced technologies and processes such as recording and monitoring of forests, woodlands and protected natural areas. The PSP also aims at its research development and the promotion of knowledge in the environmental sciences. For this, it provides scientific knowledge by utilizing the scientific potential and infrastructure of the Department.

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

The programme has set at thirty (30) the maximum number of admitted students per academic year. In the academic year 2022-2023, the number of admitted students was 7, the number of all registered postgraduate students was 7, while the number of finished graduates (i.e., those that completed all requirements and graduated) was 7. The total number of PSP graduates since its initial establishment in 2022 is 7. Most of the current students and recent graduates the EEA Panel interviewed stated that the PSP Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas of the Democritus University of Thrace was among their first choice based on the curriculum, methodologies used, response and organization of the PSP, as well as familiarity.

The PSP consists of a minimum of two (2) academic semesters study, plus summer session, resulting in level 7 Diploma of Postgraduate Studies. There are no study tracks/specializations. To graduate, the student must have successfully completed a total of 75 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (60 ECTS for coursework and 15 ECTS for the required practical training). There are no elective courses offered. There is no requirement for the completion of a postgraduate thesis. Lectures for the first semester (4 courses) and second semester (4 courses) are given in-person on campus and/or remotely and synchronously. Attendance in lectures is mandatory and final examinations are administered in-person on campus. The EEA Panel found that the number of courses offered cover advanced as well as new topics and technologies in the PSP focus on Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas.

The PSP prepares graduates for careers in both the private and public sector of the economy, such as forest services and industry, environmental services, consulting companies, as well as public bodies. There are strong links to the society, which is key priority of the PSP Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas, the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, and the Institution.

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

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Institution has developed and implemented its Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy (<https://duth.gr/en/University/Quality-Assurance-Unit>; https://duth.gr/Portals/0/-%20-final-logo_certified.pdf). The Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, in collaboration with the University Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the Department Internal Evaluation Group (IEG), has harmonized the quality policy of the PSP Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas with that of the

University, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the PSP, as well as that of the academic unit and other educational programmes.

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

The processes and procedures used for the monitoring and continuous improvement of the quality of the PSP are as follows: a) The strict implementation of the PSP Policy for Quality Assurance; b) The optimal disposition and management of the PSP resources, including those resulting from tuition fees; c) The establishment of Quality Assurance objectives of the PSP on an annual basis; d) The periodic internal evaluation and monitoring of the PSP on an annual basis; e) The collection of Quality Data, quantitation, analysis and improvement of the PSP; f) The disclosure and publication of all information related to the PSP made publicly accessible; g) The periodic external evaluation and accreditation following established procedures by HAHE.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP is closely monitored through the course/instructor evaluation by the students, the collection of data by the IEG and transfer to QAU on an annual basis. Training of the PSP teaching staff is accomplished with the help of the DUTH Support Teaching & Learning Center (<https://duth.gr/en/Services/Structures/Teaching-Support-Office>). The findings are supported by the documents provided to the EEA Panel by the PSP, the interviews with the teaching, support staff and alumni of the programme.

II. Analysis

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

The Quality Assurance Policy is sufficiently communicated to all parties involved. The PSP has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals regarding the postgraduate programme. However, the number of targets is very limited; only five (5) targets have been set, monitored, and the degree of achievement reported. In particular, the following targets are not set and thus are not monitored: annual percentage of graduates to all registered students; dropout rate; grade point average of postgraduate theses; research output by the faculty such number of publications, citations and impact; participation of postgraduate students in research such as number of projects in which postgraduate students participate, number of publications with postgraduate students as co-authors, number of conferences in which postgraduate students participate, percentage of postgraduate students who continued for doctoral studies, etc. Based on the data provided to the EEA Panel, the targets are also paired with suitable key

performance indicators (KPIs). Goals are monitored, updated, and communicated, according to the Quality Assurance Policy implemented by the Institution and the PSP. The quality assurance system is reviewed on an annual basis by the IEG and results communicated to the University QAU, which issues an annual report. According to 2023 Quality Targets report, the degree of achieving set targets ranges from 0/8 (number of participants in Erasmus) to 7/10 (number of external teaching staff). The low degree of achieving the target relative to the number of applicants (7/30) raises concerns relative to the long-term sustainability of the otherwise very good postgraduate programme. Actions should be taken to drastically increase the number of applicants and thus increase the number of registered students.

III. Conclusions

Overall, this is a well-organized PSP focusing on the quality of the offered knowledge and skills. The Department has established a Quality Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP. It includes a commitment for its implementation and continuous improvement. The metrics established by the PSP and the Institution are adequate in tracking and documenting the quality of the programme. However, the number of targets set and monitored by the PSP is very limited and the degree of achieving several targets is very low. The current low student enrolment is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the PSP.

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	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

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

R1-1 Major improvements made as a result of course/instructor evaluations should be documented, communicated to all involved, and published on the PSP website.

R1-2 Increase the number of targets (KPIs) set by the PSP as well as the degree of achievement.

R1-3 Interactions with alumni upon their graduation should be exploited as a potential means of informing the decision-making process regarding future directions of the programme.

R1-4 Establishment of a formal external Advisory Board should be considered, which will guide the continuous review, revision, and further development of the curriculum.

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

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

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP has been designed to meet important needs relating to the inventory and monitoring of forests, forest lands and protected areas. These needs are expected to increase in the next years. The EEA Panel considers that overall, the PSP is successful in providing its graduates with useful and specialised knowledge and experience relevant to its subject matter. The structure of the curriculum is reasonable but needs improvement, particularly in the part concerning practical training. Cooperation with various stakeholders is considered a particularly positive element.

II. Analysis

The design of the PSP was based on the relevant legislation and regulations of the University/Department.

The curriculum design needs to get improved based on the following points:

- The course descriptions do not correspond to postgraduate level studies. The PSP primarily targets graduates of Departments of Forestry and Environmental Management. This was also verified through the meetings of the EEA Panel with students and graduates of the PSP. However, the way the course descriptions are presented refers to undergraduate courses of such Departments. It should be noted that, according to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, graduates of Level 7 of the 2nd Cycle of Studies, to which the PSP corresponds, should “gain highly specialised knowledge, some of which is cutting- edge knowledge in a field of work or study and which forms the basis for original thinking” and “gain specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and processes”. Nevertheless, discussions with the teaching staff revealed that courses provide the desired specialisation in the respective subjects.
- In all course descriptions, the same general paragraph describes the organisation of the teaching procedure. The same holds for the sections describing the assessment process for students and the general competences to be acquired through each course. A presentation of the specific characteristics of each course would be expected instead.
- In the course descriptions, the referred number of lecture hours is 60, while the course guide refers to 30 hours, which is probably the correct number. The remaining student effort hours corresponding to the 7.5 ECTS of each course are presented in a very general way, which is the same for all courses.
- Certain course descriptions refer to course webpages that are not functioning or to which the members of the EEA Panel do not have access. For the same reason it is not possible for evaluators to access the bibliography of each course. It would be expected that the bibliography for each course would be presented in the respective course description.
- The PSP does not offer any elective courses.

The structure of the PSP is reasonable. Cooperation with various stakeholders, especially at the level of the practical training, is considered a particularly positive element.

The practical training does not focus on research work but on gaining practical work

experience. The lack of an obvious link between the PSP and research is concerning. Although the PSP's Proposal for Academic Accreditation states that “the introduction of postgraduate students to research takes place during their practical training”, in practice this does not seem to be the case. Stakeholders expressed the view that the practical training should be of longer duration (at least three months) and that this would be of benefit to both the host institutions and the students themselves.

With the completion of the practical training, a form is completed by the employer and a corresponding form by the student. It would be expected that students would prepare and present a comprehensive report.

The procedure for reviewing and updating the PSP follows the relevant regulations of the Department.

Although there is no formal procedure for frequent communication with stakeholders and external experts, this happens especially during the students' practical training. Stakeholders stated that they had discussed the content of the PSP with the Department during its development. There is no structured and formal way of communication with graduates, nor has the University or the Department moved forward in establishing an alumni association, which would particularly facilitate communication with them.

The Study Guide provides the basic information that students should have at the start of their studies. However, it lacks detailed information expected in the Study Guide.

III. Conclusions

The EEA Panel considers that in general the PSP has a reasonable structure and succeeds in providing its graduates with useful knowledge and experience relevant to the inventory and monitoring of forests, forest lands and protected areas. The Panel believes that it can be improved by adopting the suggestions presented below so that its implementation becomes even more effective.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the EEA Panel recommends:

R2-1 Rephrase the curriculum to make it clear that the courses are at the post graduate level.

Moreover, the other comments of the EEA Panel in the above analysis regarding the design of the curriculum should be taken into consideration.

R2-2 Increase by 15 ECTS the weighting of the PSP (to bring it to a total of 90 ECTS) and provide students with the possibility to choose between: (i) Practical training with a duration of 3-6 months (30 ECTS). Upon completion of the practical training, the students should be required to submit a comprehensive report, which will be presented in an open presentation and evaluated by both the host organization and the Department. (ii) A research-oriented postgraduate thesis of 3 - 6 months duration (30 ECTS). On completion of the Research Project the student will be required to submit a comprehensive report, which will be presented in an open presentation at the Department.

R2-3 Establish the Program's (and the Department's) alumni association for more organized and effective communication with the PSP graduates.

R2-4 Create a formal external Advisory Board, which will be composed of stakeholders and alumni of the PSP. The Board will provide feedback on improvements that can be made or new needs that arise and can be addressed by the PSP.

R2-5 Enrich the Study Guide, with information that is expected in a PSP Guide.

R2-6 Consider offering elective courses, which could further improve student-centred learning.

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 mode of operation and all relevant procedures concerning the PSP are presented in the Study Guide. Reference is made to the admission procedures of new students, their selection criteria and evaluation in general. Part-time study options are available for working students or those with serious personal issues, and studies can be suspended for force majeure reasons.

The availability of an academic advisor is described in detail in the Institution Operation Regulation of the Academic Advisor as well as its role in supporting the students during their studies.

A Study Guide is distributed annually. Students are trained in such a way that they understand the various research techniques and the different methods of processing and analysis used in the inventory and monitoring of forests, woodlands, and protected areas.

Course attendance is compulsory and strictly monitored. Students can attend up to 35% of lectures remotely via MS Teams. Students must pass exams in all courses over the first two semesters.

There is a mandatory summer practical training, accounting for 15 ECTS credits, each equating to 25 hours of work (375 hours in total). Students' rights and privileges are detailed, and tuition fee exemptions are available for those with low income. Outstanding students may receive excellence awards and scholarships.

Complaints can be submitted and processed electronically on the PSP website, which provides information in Greek and English. Course/instructor evaluations by the students are done at the end of each semester following the Institution's quality assurance system.

Students' performance evaluation in courses is done through various assignments and final examinations in which they must participate. Likewise, an assessment is made for the practical training.

II. Analysis

Admissions do not favor vulnerable groups or low-income individuals. Lecture halls are satisfactory and functional.

There is no personalized approach concerning the way the courses are selected. The full functionality of the distance learning platforms and tools and the adoption of alternative teaching methods by the teaching staff is not taken into consideration. Students are not encouraged to develop individual skills at least until they get to the practical training. The 375 hours of summer practical training is not considered to be sufficient. For instance, if the student completes the requirement of practical training through Erasmus+, the training has been for a full semester.

There does not seem to be any structured way of utilizing the results of the questionnaires completed by the students in order to improve their studies.

The active participation role of the students can be seen through the realization of tasks assigned to them and the implementation of the practical training.

III. Conclusions

The EEA Panel considers that in general the PSP functions adequately concerning teaching, and assessment. On the other hand, the Panel believes that learning is not entirely student-centred but can be improved by adopting the suggestions presented below so that its implementation becomes even more effective.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

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

R3-1 Having elective courses for students would give them the opportunity to choose courses that are closer to their interests and preferences.

R3-2 Establish a postgraduate student association.

R3-3 Embrace alternative pedagogical approaches like flipped classrooms, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning to actively engage students in the learning process.

R3-4 Consider increasing the duration of the practical training to 960 hours.

R3-5 Document the utilization of the results of course/instructor evaluations by the students.

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP Study Guide provides all necessary information, such as: admission process, course registration, attendance requirements, and scholarship opportunities. Additionally, academic ethics, particularly concerning intellectual property protection and addressing plagiarism, are addressed.

The PSP Coordinating/Steering Committee selects students based on various criteria including their degree grade, undergraduate course performance, thesis relevance, English proficiency, additional degrees, research and professional experience, publications, recommendations, and interviews. The student selection process is detailed in the PSP Internal Operating Regulation.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is implemented throughout the curriculum, with the PSP Student Guide providing comprehensive information about the services and privileges available to students. The duration for the awarding of the Postgraduate Studies Diploma is two semesters plus a summer session. Student mobility within European programs is very limited.

Concerning practical training, the PSP has developed a network encompassing social, cultural, and private business to support this program component. The practical training is considered a valuable part of the

program, contributing significantly to the development of both job-specific and broader skills.

The Diploma Supplement is issued automatically and free of charge for all PSP graduates in Greek and English.

A Code of Research Ethics is not included in the PSP Study Guide.

According to the internal regulations of the PSP, the successful attendance of all the compulsory courses of the study program and the required number of elective courses, the successful completion of the practical training lead to the Postgraduate Studies Diploma, level seven (7) of the National and European Qualifications Framework

II. Analysis

All matters concerning practical training are well defined in the Study Guide, which is very detailed, as is the case of the PSP Internal Regulation. Granting of scholarships is also referenced.

III. Conclusions

The EEA Panel considers that in general the PSP functions adequately concerning student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies and certification. On the other hand, the Panel believes that student mobility and participation in European programs can offer an added value to the existing PSP.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 4, the EEA Panel recommends the following:
R4-1 Enhance student mobility and participation in European programs.

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 is supported by competent and qualified personnel who can adequately carry out its implementation. The permanent staff have been selected through open and merit-based procedures and are making sedulous efforts for their professional development. The Department appears to be understaffed, as there has been no recruitment in recent years and, on the contrary, staff commitments have increased considerably.

II. Analysis

The recruitment of teaching staff is carried out according to procedures described in detail in the decisions of the Senate of the Democritus University of Thrace. The selection takes into account objective and merit-based criteria. The procedures for recruitment of external teaching staff need improvement. Recruitment is essentially done through assignments to qualified people who are known to the Department's teaching staff. People with more qualifications and experience could be attracted through open calls.

The Department encourages faculty to participate in scientific conferences and professional development activities.

Although in theory there are several opportunities for staff mobility, in practice mobility is limited due to the workload undertaken by staff. Faculty members have essentially no possibility for sabbaticals and their participation in Erasmus actions is occasional. If a faculty member participates in a mobility action, his/her duties are delegated to the other faculty members.

There is a disparity in the teaching load of the teaching staff. There is also an imbalance in the teaching hours of faculty members from semester to semester. Several members of the teaching staff have developed considerable research activity and are involved in research projects that have secured funding from both national and European resources.

The Department hosts notable infrastructure (17 teaching/research laboratories) that can be used to link research and teaching. However, the lack of an obvious link between the PSP and research is concerning. Although the PSP's Academic Accreditation Proposal states that "the introduction of postgraduate students to research is done during their practical training", in practice this does not seem to be the case.

The course/instructor evaluation by students is carried out electronically each semester through the University's Quality Assurance Unit's Information System. The questionnaires are completed by students voluntarily and anonymously. To date, the results reflect almost complete student satisfaction. The Department's Internal Regulations do not provide for a specific way of evaluating the results of the surveys, nor specific measures to deal with cases of low scores. It is the responsibility of each lecturer to take into account, as he/she understands it, the students' comments as reflected in the surveys for self-evaluation and self-improvement.

There is no defined research strategy of the PSP. General strategic guidelines are included in the PSP quality targets (KPIs) document.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is supported by competent and qualified personnel. The professional development and involvement of staff in research is suppressed due to the understaffing of the Department. The distribution of staff teaching hours in each semester could be more balanced.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the following actions are proposed by the EEA Panel:

R5-1 Increase the Department's staff by recruiting new, qualified members, who will relieve the heavy workload of the existing members, thus increasing the opportunities for professional development and engagement in research activities.

R5-2 Open advertisement of the PSP's external teaching staff positions in order to attract the most qualified personnel.

R5-3 Better planning so that a faculty member's teaching load is more evenly distributed from semester to semester (except of cases where there is a specific reason justifying this differentiation).

R5-4 A more structured utilization of the student evaluation surveys of teaching staff is suggested. For this purpose, the Department should develop internal regulations with specific reference to how the results are to be used to improve the PSP and to establish ways of reacting in cases of low scores.

R5-5 Develop a research strategy for the PSP. To better link teaching to research, the suggestions of the EEA Panel made in the evaluation of Principle 2 apply.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department provides the PSP with essential resources such as classrooms, labs, technological support, and access to online resources to create a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere. The digital equipment provided by the PSP meets the standards of the education that is being offered to the students.

A variety of services are offered to PSP students, encompassing accommodation, career guidance, student welfare support, and sports/cultural amenities.

Students are well-informed about the support services, and these services are operational and conveniently accessible through both the PSP/Department website and the Study Guide.

Capable administrative staff is in place to effectively manage the PSP student

support services.

The PSP may reward postgraduate students for their academic performance through excellence awards.

There is a tuition utilization plan in which a percentage is invested in equipment that is used not only by the PSP but by the entire Department.

II. Analysis

The PSP does not provide tuition fee exemptions to students who fulfill economic or social requirements. There is sufficient and competent administrative staff to ensure the smooth operation of the student support services. The students can easily access all the information necessary concerning their studies, their rights, and responsibilities through the official website of the PSP or the Study Guide. There is also career counseling, student welfare office, and sports/cultural facilities as part of the University.

III. Conclusions

The EEA Panel considers that in general the PSP has adequate learning resources and student support. On the other hand, the Panel believes that Enhanced Communication, Peer Mentoring Programs, and Alumni Network can offer an added value to the existing PSP, described in the recommendations below.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 6, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R6-1 Update bibliographic sources and software more frequently.

R6-2 Utilize multiple communication channels such as social media, newsletters, and mobile apps to keep students updated on support services, events, and important announcements.

R6-3 Establish peer mentoring programs where senior students can guide and support newcomers, facilitating a smoother transition into the program and enhancing the sense of community.

R6-4 Develop an alumni network to provide current students with mentoring opportunities, career advice, and networking possibilities.

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 utilises a number of information management platforms for the collection and processing of data concerning students and their progress through the PSP.

II. Analysis

The PSP utilizes the information collection and processing platforms that support the Department and are related to:

- Evaluation of educational work by students
- Students participating in the Program (e.g., number of active students, grades)
- Counselling and other services offered to students

Students also have access to MS Teams for distance learning.

There are no procedures for monitoring the employability and progress of

graduates, nor has a departmental alumni association been established.

Student satisfaction surveys are conducted each semester. The Department's Internal Regulations do not include details on the ways of utilizing the surveys' results, nor a specific way of reacting in cases of low scores. Faculty reported that they evaluate the results and take them into account for self-evaluation and self-improvement.

Current students and recent graduates generally expressed satisfaction for their ability to access information relevant to their studies.

III. Conclusions

The PSP utilizes adequate infrastructure for collecting and processing data concerning students and their progression. There is a gap in the management of information on graduates of the PSP, since no procedures have been established to monitor their employability and progress, nor has a departmental alumni association been set up.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the EEA Panel proposes:

R7-1 Development of the means for a more structured utilization of the student evaluation surveys of teaching staff. For this purpose, the Department should develop internal regulations with specific reference to how the results are to be used to improve the PSP and to establish a way of reacting in cases of low scores.

R7-2 Establishment of a platform that will link the PSP with its graduates (e.g., alumni association). This platform will serve the purpose of monitoring their employability and their progress in general, and communicating more effectively with them.

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Information about the Democritus University of Thrace, the Department and the PSP are available online in well-designed websites. The University website is organised into 8 categories. The main tabs provide information about the University and includes information about the Quality Assurance Unit and the external evaluation reports of the Institution and the courses. There is a tab about Studies, which include the PSP description, Erasmus and other study services. The University's PSPs are grouped into Departments. The PSP on "Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas" has a dedicated webpage at the following link: <http://fim.fmenr.duth.gr/>, which provides information about the study program, mode of attendance, assessment criteria, timetable, teaching staff, and staff CVs. This information is available in both Greek and English.

II. Analysis

All pertinent information about the PSP, including learning outcomes, courses, curriculum, teaching staff, and quality policy, is thoroughly presented on the dedicated webpage. The information published on the website is up-to-date, clear, easily accessible, and easy to navigate. Additionally, information about the PSP is accessible on the website of the Department, along with the academic unit's Policy for Quality Assurance. The English version of the PSP website is limited in content. The PSP website has links to social media.

III. Conclusions

The websites of the University, the Department and the PSP provide information about both teaching and departmental activities in Greek, and in English.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 8, the EEA Panel recommends the following: R8-1
The PSP website should have more marketing information about the programme's usefulness, job opportunities, and testimonies of Alumni.

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

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

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

The above comprise the evaluation of:

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The self-assessment of the programme is based on procedures and continuous improvement of the level of educational offerings along with supporting the learning environment, ensuring the current character of the programme, and the strategic goals of the Institution. Factors considered for the assessment include the student's workload, students' expectations, and the assessment of the students. Also, scientific and technological developments, societal and job market needs, as well as national, European, and international policies are considered. The PSP Director collects all requests for changes to the programme. The annual report is submitted to QAU for review, and recommendations are shared with the general faculty assembly. Decisions for improvements are made at the end of the academic year and are implemented by the beginning of the following academic year.

II. Analysis

Through the process of internal review and continuous improvement plan, the

positive aspects of the programme are reinforced by adding new topics based on scientific developments. The collected information is analysed, and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. There is a strategically designed consideration for improving courses using the course evaluations by students. Programme weaknesses are addressed when problems are identified in students' evaluations. The PSP is reviewed and revised but without the direct involvement of students and other stakeholders.

III. Conclusions

The self-assessment procedure of the programme is well established but should involve more systematic participation of the students and the external stakeholders.

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

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

R9-1 The PSP should have a systematic participation of the students and the external stakeholders in the PSP continuous improvement.

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP “Inventory and Monitoring of Forests and Forest Lands and Protected Areas” does not have an external evaluation. Following the instructions of HAHE to this Principle, the EEAP utilised the IQAS Accreditation Report (2018) of the Democritus University of Thrace and the 2016 external evaluation. The Department provided a detailed response about the previous external evaluations and the PSP has taken into consideration those relevant recommendations and provided a detailed response to the measures of improvement and the responsible for the implementation of all recommendations for the PSP.

II. Analysis

The members of the teaching staff of the PSP are aware of the importance of the external evaluation and its contribution to improvement of the PSP. A procedure for the utilisation of the outcomes of the external evaluation is in place and responsibilities for the implementation of the recommendations is a very good practice of the Department. Some recommendations from the previous external evaluations were not fully implemented. The recommendation for improving the English version of the website was not sufficiently implemented. The use of English in teaching and research seminars is not fully embraced. The active participation of the students and external stakeholders towards improving the educational processes has not been fully incorporated.

III. Conclusions

The recommendations from the previous external evaluations were considered, but few of them have not been fully implemented.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no recommendations for Principle 10.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The PSP has the necessary procedures for monitoring quality assurance and aligns with the strategic objectives of the Department and the University.
- The faculty and staff are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and dedicated to their mission.
- Employment potential of the new PSP graduates in public and/or private positions is high.
- Employers and social partners praised the PSP and believe there is a clear need for such graduates.
- The programme is addressing an area of need in the Greek economy, both in local and national level.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The curriculum is not flexible as there are no elective courses, which reduces the students' possibility to specialize.
- There is no defined research strategy.
- There are limited interactions with stakeholders and alumni after graduation.
- Limited mobility of students, faculty and other scientific personnel.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Establish a formal process for the active participation of students, graduates, external stakeholders in the curriculum development and study programme revisions.
- Increase the number of targets (KPIs) set by the PSP and monitor on an annual basis.
- Develop a well-defined research strategy to better link education to research.
- Increase interactions with stakeholders and PSP alumni.
- Increase mobility of students, faculty and other scientific personnel.
- Improve the PSP Study Guide and the curriculum.
- Consider offering elective courses.
- Consider establishing a formal external Advisory Board comprised of external faculty, graduates, and social partners to actively assist and guide the continuous review, revision, and further development of the PSP curriculum, enhance the entire programme, as well as attract external resources.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 3, 5, 7.**

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

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
PAVLOSTATHIS SPYROS	Signed by PAVLOSTATHIS SPYROS
KADIS CONSTANTINOS	Signed by KADIS CONSTANTINOS
PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS	Signed by PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS
Γιωτόπουλος Γεώργιος	Signed by Γιωτόπουλος Γεώργιος