



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
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Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs

Department: **Physical Education and Sport Sciences**
Institution: **Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)**
Dates: **May 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 New Postgraduate Study Programme of **Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs** of the **Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)** 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 new postgraduate study programme of **Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs** of the **Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Dr. Andreas A. Roussakis (Chair)**
Imperial College London, London, UK
- 2. Prof. Panagiotis Karanis**
University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus
- 3. Assoc. Prof. George Panayiotou**
European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus
- 4. Prof. Konstantin Gus Kousoulas**
Louisiana State University, LA, USA
- 5. Ms. Valentini Tzimogianni**
University of Patras, Patra, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The review was held remotely from the 19th to 24th May 2025. Interviews and private External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) meetings took place via teleconference. The EEAP members attended a private introductory meeting on the 19th May for a high-level discussion on the profile of the PSP and to make plans for the review and writing-up. Submitted documentation, including the timetable of scheduled sessions, were provided to the EEAP members by HAHE on time.

On the 20th May 2025, the EEAP members had three live sessions with [a]. the DUTH's Vice Rector and President of the institutional Quality Assurance Team (abbreviated here as MODIP), the Head of Physical Education and Sports Science Department, and the PSP Course Director, [b]. a representative group of teaching staff, and [c]. social partners representatives. Of note, the Course Director informed the EEAP members of four last-minute changes in the list of invitees (three in the social partners group and one from teaching staff) with apologies for the absences. Next (21st-24th May 2025), the EEAP members individually reviewed all available information and provided input to the EEAP Chair – the EEAP members jointly discussed the final draft of the report and agreed on the overall mark. The EEAP members reviewed the PSP proposal documentation in line with HAHE recommendations and raised no concerns from a procedural point of view. The EEAP members reviewed the following documentation:

PSP-specific documents provided by DUTH

A0_new_Table of contents.pdf
A1_new_Proposal for Accreditation.pdf
A2_Senate Decision for the Establishment of the PSP.pdf
A3_Introductory Report.pdf
A4_Senate Decision Institutional Strategy.pdf
A5_Feasibility and Sustainability studies.pdf
A6_new_Quality Assurance Policy.pdf
A7_new_Goals and Objectives.pdf
A8_new_Course Guide.pdf
A9_Outline of Course Modules.pdf
A10_Named list of teaching staff.pdf
A11_new_Internal Operating Procedures (general).pdf
A12_Operating Procedures for Student-facing Activities.pdf
A13_new_Complaints Management.pdf
A14_new_Academic Advisor.pdf
A15_Local Research Ethics Regulations.pdf
A16_Template of Diploma.pdf
A17_Achievements of Teaching Staff.pdf
A18_Local Regulations for E-learning.pdf
A19_Tuition fees utilization plan.pdf

Supporting documentation provided by DUTH upon request

Presentation slides_Course Director_2025.05.20.pdf

Presentation slides_Head of Department_2025.05.20.pdf

Updated list of short CVs of teaching staff_2025.05.20.pdf

General information provided by HAHE

ACRONYMS.pdf

European Qualifications Framework.pdf

Accreditation Management System - expert manual.pdf

MN1 Standard NEW PSP EN.pdf

MN12 NEW PSP MAPPING GRID.pdf

MN13 NEW PSP Accreditation Report Template.pdf

MN6 NEW PSP Guidelines for the EEAP.pdf

GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION.pdf

M11 REIMBURSEMENT FORM.pdf

M9 INFORMATIVE LETTER PSP.pdf

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PSP COMPLETION.pdf

All conversations were held professionally at a high standard in Greek language; the report was written in English. Discussions were focused on clarifying any inconsistencies and capturing missing data as well as identifying opportunities and areas for development. High-level feedback notes were provided by EEAP members to DUTH colleagues at the close-out meeting in a constructive way using a positive tone.

Meetings [the time below refers to the UTC+2 time zone (Athens, Greece)]

Monday, 19th May 2025

[16:00 - 17:00] Introductory private meeting – EEAP members only.

Tuesday, 20th May 2025

[15:00 – 16:00] Meeting with Prof. M Grigoriou, Vice Rector & President of MODIP; Prof. V Derri, Head of the Department; Prof. P Malliou, Course Director; and Mrs. S Gkavaki, MODIP Supervisor.

[16:00-16:45] Meeting with teaching staff Prof. A Gioftsidou; Prof. H Douda; Assoc. Prof. A Avloniti; and Prof. A Beneka.

[18:00-18:45] Meeting with social partners Ms. S Argyropoulou, Project Manager and HR Director of NGO “Perpato”; Mr. C Koutras, Physiotherapist (private); and Mr. K Lechoudis, Komitini Deputy Mayor for Economic Affairs, Economic Planning, Development, Employment and Local Economic Development.

[19:30-20:00] Close-out meeting with Prof. M Grigoriou; Prof. V Derri; Prof. P Malliou; and Mrs. S Gkavaki.

Wednesday 21st May 2025 to Saturday 24th May 2025

[All day] Writing-up of the report – EEAP members only.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

DUTH (in Greek: Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης), was established in July 1973. Its administrative seat is in Komotini, the capital city of Rhodope. Today, the university comprises 10 schools: School of Physical Education Sport Sciences and Occupational Therapy, School of Law, School of Engineering, School of Management Science and Accounting, School of Education, School of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, School of Health Sciences, School of Sciences, School of Classics and Humanities, and Faculty of Social, Political and Economic Sciences. Within these schools, DUTH has 32 departments.

DUTH is ranked highly among Greek Universities; it is a leading institution in higher education in northern Greece and a hub for high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate studies, research and innovation. DUTH has an increasing student population of approximately 47,700 registered undergraduates and postgraduate students - PhD candidates included - a group of teaching staff and professional researchers of over 760, and a group of approximately 300 administrative and support staff. The School of Physical Education and Sport Sciences comprises the Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, and the Department of Occupational Therapy.

The Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences commenced its activities in the 1984-1985 academic year (Π.Δ. 465/29/30.11.83). Its administrative offices are in Komotini. As of 2025, the Department has a group of 30 teaching staff and 4 administrators and managers who work collaboratively to support students in two undergraduate and five postgraduate courses. The mission of the Department is to: [a]. develop and promote Sports Sciences and Physical Education through novel academic research and applied teaching practices, [b]. provide graduates the essential skills and knowledge to independently lead their own career, [c]. contribute to the progress of professional athletes within Greece and at the same time disseminate the sporting idea to the general population, and [d] increase awareness on the benefits of physical education as a means to significantly improve quality-of-life metrics.

The “Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs” course is a newly established PSP within the Physical Education and Sports Sciences Department. The Course Director anticipates the new PSP to admit their first students in the 2025-2026 academic year [planned start date: 01-September-2025]. The Course Leads aim to: [a]. provide advanced knowledge and skills related to the broader field of the science of physical education, exercise and sports, and enhance the experience of learners on practical matters, [b]. offer the opportunity to students who wish to specialise in niche areas of physical education, competitive sports, with a special interest in improving health and quality-of-life outcomes, [c]. further advance technical knowledge so that (future) graduates are able to easily adjust to the many challenges of the current job market, and [d]. teach prospective students how to handle new evidence and demonstrate continuous learning and professional development.

The Department is adequately resourced to support the PSP’s academic and research activities, whilst meeting the educational, teaching and professional needs of faculty members and students. The PSP is designed to offer a hybrid environment to students with both face-to-face (at the Komotini campus) and remote educational activities, using novel edutech and

appropriate teaching methodology.

The course – in its current presentation – spans over twelve months (one *calendar* year) that is equivalent to approximately 75 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits. The PSP covers a reasonably wide range of learning themes in Individual & Group Functional Exercise field. The course is taught in Greek; the dissertation can be written in either Greek or English language. The recruitment target is set to 40 new students for each academic year – the lowest acceptable number of students is set to a total of 15 (new) students.

Successful applicants must provide evidence of/demonstrate: [a]. a university degree/diploma issued by a Greek university or equivalent qualification from abroad recognised by the Hellenic National Academic Recognition and Information Center (DOATAP), [b]. sound knowledge (B2 level) of either English, French, German, Italian, or Spanish language, and [c]. a successfully completed application form. Candidates are assessed according to strict eligibility criteria, in line with a point system that considers: [a]. degree grade point average, [b]. time of completion of undergraduate studies, [c]. publication(s) in scientific journals, and [d]. additional degrees/diplomas. Student admissions are signed off by a dedicated three-member Committee at DUTH.

Students are invited to provide feedback during the feedback collection period, which takes place between the 8th and 11th week of each semester. Students are assessed via written and/or oral exams in January, June, and September each year. Marks range from 0 to 10; a mark above 5 is considered a pass, while marks from 0 to 4 are considered a fail and require students to resit. Upon successful completion of studies, graduates achieve a Level 7 qualification that is equivalent to a Master's degree.

Tuition fees amount to 2,600 EUR. A thirty percent of fees-generated income is allocated to DUTH's Special Account for Research Funds, while the remaining seventy percent used to cover operational and staffing costs. Eligible students are entitled to apply for scholarships and bursaries, which are provided under special terms and conditions.

The PSP is in accordance with principle requirements for most principles. However, some of the aspects are partially met to signal that further development is expected. Review points on individual principles are found in detail below. The overall judgement score is at the end of the report.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

- *The Institutional strategy for postgraduate studies, which includes a special strategy for e-learning, as long as it is applied to the Institution's PSP*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the new PSP*
- *Quality Policy of the academic unit for the development and improvement of PSP*
- *Quality Targeting of the academic unit for the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EEAP reviewed the proposal of the new PSP, the institutional strategic plan, the feasibility and sustainability study report, the quality policy and quality targeting documentation for the PSP. The following sections highlight key findings on how the Department meets the essential requirements of this principle.

The academic profile and mission

Focused on high-quality training, education, and research, DUTH leaders are committed to developing a new community for experts in Physical Education and Sports Sciences who drive excellence in applied physical education science and in developing novel research in this field, for the benefit of the general population, athletes, as well as patients in the Greek health and care system.

The Head of the Department is driven by high ethical standards and a deep understanding of the impactful role individual and group functional exercise programmes can have in the Greek society. This is reflected in the departmental mission and strategic plan. The Head of the Department, supported by the Vice Rector and DUTH Senior Managers, aim, jointly, for the establishment of the new PSP in the Greek ecosystem that will promote the reputation of the Department in Thrace and beyond. With time, the Course Director and DUTH leaders aim to

inspire individuals interested in functional exercise programmes to take more responsibilities and, as new leaders themselves, pave the way for positive change in physical sciences education. Combined, the above points demonstrate the Department's mission to offer students of this PSP the tools, skills, and knowledge they need to become competent professionals.

The institutional strategy

The EEAP reviewed the DUTH strategic plan (2024-2027) and supporting documentation. In a nutshell, the main institutional objectives include [a]. the strengthening and upgrading of existing and new educational and research activities, [b]. the strengthening of extroversion and internationalisation of the institution, including the development of non-hellenophone programmes and the engagement with the EMERGE university alliance, and [c]. the development of stronger long-lasting connections with the wider job market. The desired primary outcome of the institution is the increased visibility and prestige of DUTH at a national and international level. Through new PSPs, such as the one under review, DUTH has developed a strategy that is outlined by seven pillars and 15 short- and mid-term objectives.

SWOT analysis

The EEAP reviewed the results of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted at an institutional level. In the provided SWOT report, the analysts consider the potential benefits, limitations, opportunities, and risks associated with the delivery of new PSPs; the SWOT is not specific to the PSP under review.

Key strengths refer to: [a]. high-quality PSPs that follow current trends, [b]. utilisation of e-learning practices, [c]. the significant experience of recruited teaching staff, and [d]. the emphasis on research and innovation. Weaknesses (as reported in the SWOT analysis) refer to: [a]. limited access to funds, [b]. limited internationalisation, [c]. insufficient links with job market organisations, and [d] the arguably high amount of tuition fees. Opportunities, based on the current SWOT report, refer to: [a]. the development of collaborations with other academic institutions and businesses, [b]. an increasing anecdotal demand for overseas students, [c]. the broader use of edutech tools, and [d]. the increasing value professionals in sports science give to individuals who have completed postgraduate studies (any). Threats and challenges, in this context, refer to: [a]. adversities related to competitiveness within sports science professionals, [b]. challenges in securing central funding, [c]. challenges in global affairs leading to uncertainty and repeated socioeconomic crises, [d]. the unstable legal framework and delayed processes that contribute to higher bureaucracy.

Feasibility metrics

The EEAP reviewed the submitted feasibility and sustainability report that outlines the proposed position of the Department on DUTH's strategic map. The "Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs" PSP adheres to DUTH's policies for further development of specialist knowledge and methodology in Physical Education and Sports Sciences, in response to unmet educational, research, and professional needs of active individuals in the Greek society. As well as providing high-quality teaching experiences to students, this PSP offers to those interested in developing their knowledge and skills further the opportunity to conduct original research - at the Master's level - and apply evidence from the literature to practice.

The report continues with an indirect comparison of the learning objectives of this PSP with those from the undergraduate programme of the Department to note that the new PSP aims to offer specialist knowledge in individualised and group functional exercise programmes which is a niche area with many potentials. Unlike the undergraduate programme, this PSP aims to train professionals with a special interest in functional exercise using a structured and scientific

approach. It is the Course Director's view, that this PSP complements the undergraduate programme of Physical Education and Sports Science in the same Department. The focus is on special areas of physical exercise including common and less popular techniques such as Pilates, Yoga, and Tai Chi and a direction that aims to support populations with special characteristics including women of childbearing potential, older individuals, as well as children and adolescents.

The report includes a summary of professional achievements from the teaching staff involved, presented in a tabulated format with high-level notes about the process to follow for periodic progress review and monitoring. The report continues with a review of the facilities and infrastructure resources available at the Komotini campus and DUTH making a point about the support opportunities staff and students have in achieving their goals. The authors of the report conclude that staff contributing to the PSP are expected to grow only slightly by 2029.

Sustainability metrics

Reflecting on the national and regional society needs for economic growth, the authors recognise the programme's uniqueness in Greece. At the live conversations, the Course Director supported by fellow academics emphasised the high demand they have observed among professionals in sports sciences to undertake postgraduate studies in Greece.

The applicants recognise the opportunities of distance learning as an essential educational tool for those who reside in remote areas of Greece, and who -otherwise- could be excluded from considering further studies in higher education. To include an increasing number of students, the Department offers suitable digital facilities and a group of well-skilled teachers and support staff to support high-quality distance learning opportunities.

The sustainability report finishes with a budget breakdown and a cost forecast for the next five consecutive years, assuming that the PSP accreditation will be successful and that an average of 28 students will be steadily enrolled each academic year. In this section, the report includes high-level funding figures for several key cost areas including but not limited to salary costs, travel expenses, registration fees for seminars and conferences, scholarships, consumables, IT licences, and maintenance costs.

The structure of studies

Students are expected to complete their studies at the end of one calendar year. Prospective students are required to attend all educational activities – there is a general three absences rule for each module. Students must pass all exams in a total of 8 modules; these are split in two academic semesters. Next, students are required to undertake practical application sessions in a laboratory setting (supervised) and write up and submit a thesis on a topic of choice over a short half term labelled as the “summerperiod”.

All educational activities currently sum to a total of 75 ECTS credits, including the summer period. Successful candidates receive a Diploma “Master’s Degree in Personal and Group Functional Exercise Programs” upon successful completion of studies.

The number of admitted students

The number of admitted students is expected to be forty (40) in the 2025-2026 academic year. Reflecting on previous experience with the other PSPs in the same Department, the Course Director and the Head of the Department both share the view that they will receive a surprisingly high number of applications for this new PSP that will allow them to meet their recruitment target at ease.

Quality Assurance, goals, and KPIs

According to the revised Quality Assurance Policy of DUTH, the Department receives support to develop and collaboratively deliver thorough and methodical auditing aiming for high quality services and continuous improvement. The MODIP team at DUTH are committed to providing a detailed monitoring plan, a risk analysis plan, followed by relevant corrective and preventative actions for compliance, as/when needed.

The EEAP reviewed the goal setting plan of the PSP and discussed individual goals in further detail during the live conversations. The applicants shared in writing two strategic goals comprised of four individual goals and five subsequent KPIs.

In brief, the individual goals refer to [a]. an increasing number of students who will complete their studies on time, [b]. the enhancement of all educational outputs, [c] the involvement of increasingly more students to the Erasmus+ programme, and [d]. the recruitment of external scientists as new teaching staff. The details are included in document A.7. The EEAP members note that deliverables are expected to be completed by the end of December 2025, acknowledging that this milestone might need to be reviewed/updated.

II. Analysis

The feasibility and sustainability report offers a good overview of the foundation of the Department and its set direction. The Department's profile and mission are clearly described and aligned with DUTH's strategic goals. The applicants present a genuine SWOT report which could be presented, perhaps in a more detailed way to show greater depth needed for a new PSP. In this report, the applicant acknowledge limitations, threats and challenges and identify areas for growth.

The EEAP analysed the above data, the points made in the discussions with the Course Director, the Head of the Department, the MODIP team, and senior academics, taking into consideration the following adversities: [i] the multiple recent changes in administration (at an institutional level), [ii] the difficulty of the Greek education system to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, [iii] the difficulty of the Greek education system to support smaller academic institutions by offering central funding to hire new members of staff, [iv] the recent crises in Thrace (catastrophic wildfires, and migration crises), and [v] the impact of those events on the local economy and society.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the PSP meets a high standard of compliance with the HAHE accreditation criteria for Principle 1. The programme aligns with the DUTH principles of strategic planning, feasibility, and sustainability and sets a clear direction for growth and development for the next few years. The EEAP members felt that the departmental plans are realistic and achievable. The EEAP notes that the Department is open to implement recommended changes within the given timelines (minor changes before the formal inauguration on 1st September 2025) and medium/major changes in the next coming years.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

In line with DUTH's strategic goals, the EEAP members recommend:

- Consider involving prospective students in the programme's design and presentation (the extent of involvement to be agreed upon by the Course Director and Course Leads) in the next couple of years; the purpose is to ensure that student voices are heard, and that any unmet educational and professional needs are addressed sooner than later.
- Consider performing a detailed audit in the next couple of years to assess if the current number of postgraduate students is indeed sustainable and appropriate for the professional needs of individuals (re)entering the job market as graduates.
- Consider developing new/strengthening existing links with policy-makers from the Prefecture of Thrace, the Greek Ministry of Health, and the Greek Ministry of Education; the suggestion is to deliver new workshops (to be held remotely or face-to-face) with colleagues from other academic institutions from Greece and abroad, including initiatives with international organisations, including but not limited to partnerships with Egyptian Academic community, and home Institutions such as the School of Health Sciences at DUTH.
- Consider hosting an annual event (e.g. a summer festival over 2-3 days every year) in the Komotini campus to: [a] engage with individuals (of all ages) and families with children from the local community who are interested in participating in community work, [b] attract new students, [c] engage with minority communities in Thrace aiming to promote inclusion, and [d] seek support from local communities e.g., if you are recruiting research participants / if you are in need of connections with housing associations to support visiting students.
- Consider revising your strategic PSP plan and implementing actions for new sources of funding (including donations, if applicable) to: [a] improve current infrastructure, [b] repair and maintain equipment and any damage in infrastructure, and [c] take all necessary health and safety measures to safeguard students and staff from catastrophic events (including wildfires, earthquakes, and floods).

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

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

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

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

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

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

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

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

Documentation

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP*
- *PSP curriculum structure: courses, course categories, ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the NQF, 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: teaching assignments per subject area and per course*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Programme is underpinned by the formal decisions of the Department, the MODIP, and the Senate, demonstrating that the Institution has followed the legally prescribed approval pathway. Nevertheless, its strategic anchoring is expressed only in broad, non-quantified terms: the proposal refers to the University's expansion of postgraduate provision yet provides no measurable KPIs that would link this new PSP to the institutional plan.

A quality assurance policy for postgraduate studies is in place. Still, the text stops short of an explicit pledge by the academic unit to implement the policy and manage programme income demonstrably efficiently and transparently. Likewise, the "Targeting/Stochothesia" document lists three aspirations—better teaching, student satisfaction, and applied research—without baselines, target values, or deadlines; essential dimensions such as graduate employability, innovative paedagogy, and digitalisation are absent.

The curriculum totals 75 ECTS credits and is organised into eight taught modules plus a thesis. While the title promises broad coverage of individual and group functional-training contexts, the taught component is weighted heavily towards Pilates (two 7.5-ECTS modules). It contains only a fragmentary treatment of group exercise leadership, older-adult fitness, or advanced research methodology. The learning outcome statements in each syllabus reference the EQF level-7 framework. However, many rely on verbs such as "describe/know" rather than "critically evaluate/synthesise" and are not mapped to programme-level goals or specific assessment criteria. Assessment rubrics are provided and illustrate good practice, but they are missing in most modules, making constructive alignment only partial.

Teaching relies on standard lectures, laboratory practice, and the institutional LMS-Learning Management System (LMS) tools (e-Class); there is no documented use of flipped classroom or inquiry-based models or evidence of staff continuing professional development in digital paedagogy. Any future documented consultation procedure with students, alumni, or the fitness industry during programme design or revision is absent, and no advisory board or survey data are included in the dossier.

Staff expertise is generally aligned with subject areas. Still, some inconsistencies appear between the official staff list and the individual syllabi, and several modules are delivered by academics with limited peer-reviewed output, potentially weakening the research-led character expected at the master's level. Workload tables confirm that contact hours and self-study match ECTS conventions; however, the concentration of practical modules and specialised equipment (e.g., Pilates apparatus) could strain laboratory capacity in case of high demand, a point not addressed in the resource plan.

These observations indicate that, while the procedural foundations of programme approval are in place, key elements required by Principle 2—SMART strategic goals, balanced research-methodology content, transparent LO-assessment mapping, stakeholder participation, and demonstrable resource planning—are only partially met.

II. Analysis

The evidence shows that the Programme has cleared the required institutional checkpoints—Department, MODIP, Senate—yet several substantive elements that Principle 2 deems critical remain only partially addressed.

- **Strategic coherence and QA targets.** Although the Senate decision and the institutional strategy formally endorse the PSP, the dossier does not have a KPI table or SMART alignment grid to translate the University's expansion goals into measurable outcomes for this programme. The Quality-Policy text (document A6) cites broad commitments. Still, it stops short of naming the academic unit as responsible for implementation or stipulating how tuition-fee income will be monitored for cost-effectiveness. Consequently, the Programme lacks the feedback loops that allow MODIP to verify continuous goal attainment.
- **Curricular balance and academic depth.** At 75 ECTS credits, the structure nominally meets level-7 requirements. However, the distribution of content tilts strongly toward vocational practice: two full modules (15 ECTS) on Pilates and a practical "Specialised Programmes" module occupy one-third of taught credits, while advanced research methodology/statistics, clinical-population exercise, and group-exercise leadership receive marginal or no coverage. Internationally benchmarked PSPs typically devote ≥ 15 ECTS credits to research skills and ≥ 10 ECTS credits to special populations/clinical exercise, signalling a gap that may limit academic depth.
- **Learning-outcome design and assessment alignment.** All syllabi declare compliance with EQF-7, yet almost half of the stated LOs employ verbs such as "describe" or "know," reflecting level-6 (BSc level) expectations. Only a minority of modules publish detailed rubrics linking each LO to specific assessment criteria; most rely on generic examinations without evidence of constructive alignment. Without a published LO-mapping matrix, neither students nor external reviewers can verify that module-level outcomes feed into programme-level goals and institutional KPIs.
- **Teaching methods & staff capacity.** Lectures, lab practice, and standard LMS tools are in place. Still, the dossier does not indicate flipped-classroom, project-based, or inquiry-based designs or systematic staff CPD (Continuing Professional Development) in digital pedagogy. Staff CVs demonstrate solid expertise in specific domains; however, academics/teaching staff with limited peer-reviewed output teach some modules, and discrepancies between the staff list and individual syllabi cast doubt on whether the declared expertise aligns consistently with assigned courses. High teaching loads for a few lecturers further threaten the capacity to supervise research projects and monitor LO attainment.
- **Stakeholder engagement and market relevance.** No minutes, surveys, or advisory board reports document consultation with students, alumni, or the fitness industry. Without such evidence, the curriculum's responsiveness to job-market needs and learner expectations cannot be verified, nor can the MODIP demonstrate that external feedback informs periodic revision.
- **Overall analytical judgment.** The Programme has been approved procedurally; substantively, it displays an uneven alignment with the academic and quality standards of Principle 2. The Curriculum's strength in applied functional training is undeniable. However, its research scaffold, stakeholder integration, LO measurability, and strategic anchoring require systematic

enhancement if the MSc is to deliver the depth, transparency, and continuous-improvement cycle expected of an EQF-7 postgraduate study programme.

III. Conclusions

The Department has fulfilled the **procedural** steps required for programme approval. Still, the dossier fails to demonstrate that the Curriculum is fully **academically robust, outcomes-driven, and quality-assured** as envisaged by Principle 2.

- **Strengths**
 - Formal endorsement by the Department, MODIP, and Senate confirms adherence to the legal route for new postgraduate programmes.
 - Clear vocational focus on functional training, supported by staff with strong applied expertise and adequate laboratory infrastructure.
 - Transparent workload tables and an overall volume of 75 ECTS credits satisfy baseline EQF-7 structural requirements.
- **Key deficiencies**
 - **Strategic anchoring & SMART targets** – no KPI grid links programme aims to institutional strategy or QA indicators; the stated goals (as discussed in document A7) are generic and unmeasured.
 - **Curricular balance and research depth** – two Pilates modules and other practice-oriented topics dominate, while advanced research methodology/statistics, ageing/chronic-disease exercise, and group-exercise leadership receive insufficient coverage.
 - **Learning outcome design and transparency** – many LOs remain at level-6 (BSc) verb phrasing; only fragmentary rubrics are public, and a formal mapping matrix is missing.
 - **Stakeholder participation** – no documentary evidence of systematic consultation with students, alumni, or the fitness industry during design or review.
 - **Staff deployment and capacity** – inconsistencies appear between staff lists and syllabi; a small core of lecturers carries multiple modules, challenging supervision capacity, and research-led teaching.
- **Overall judgement**

The Programme is **partially compliant** with Principle 2. Its applied strengths are evident, yet substantive enhancements are required in strategic goal-setting, research scaffolding, outcome measurement, stakeholder integration, and resource documentation to fully meet the standards expected of an EQF-level-7 postgraduate study programme.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

A. Strategic alignment QA targets

- Draft and publish a **SMART KPI grid** that links Programme aims to the University strategy and MODIP dashboard (e.g., student satisfaction $\geq 4.2/5$, research output ≥ 1.2 papers/FTE/year, graduate employment $\geq 80\%$ within 6 months).
- Add a **formal commitment clause** in the Quality Policy (document A6) that holds the Department accountable for policy implementation and the efficient use of fee income; include an annual public financial report.

B. Curriculum rebalance and academic depth

- Merge the **two Pilates modules** into one 7.5 ECTS elective and introduce:
 - **Advanced Research Methods & Biostatistics** (7.5 ECTS, Semester A)
 - **Exercise for Ageing & Chronic Disease** (7.5 ECTS)
 - **Group-Training Leadership & Digital Fitness** (7.5 ECTS)
- Embed a "**research spiral**"—mini-projects or systematic reviews in every taught module—to scaffold thesis readiness.

C. Learning outcomes, assessment & transparency

- Rewrite all module LOs with level-7 verbs (critically evaluate, synthesise, innovate) and publish a **mapping matrix**: Module LO $\rightarrow$ Programme LO $\rightarrow$ Dublin descriptor $\rightarrow$ Assessment task.
- Produce and post **rubrics for every assessment** showing each LO's evaluation criteria; report annual LO-attainment statistics to MODIP.

D. Teaching innovation and staff development

- Launch a **CPD programme** (workshops, micro-credentials) on flipped classrooms, project-based learning, learning analytics, and AR/VR exercise applications.
- Cap individual thesis supervision to maintain research-led quality; recruit or engage a **biostatistician** to co-teach Research Methods and advise theses.

E. Stakeholder participation and market relevance

- Establish a **Stakeholder Advisory Board** with future students, alumni, gym/clinic managers, and professional bodies; meet annually and archive minutes.
- Conduct structured **surveys** of students, graduates, and employers; integrate findings into the three-year curriculum review cycle.

F. Resource planning and feasibility

- Complete a **resource audit** (laboratories, Pilates apparatus, IT, budget) and align intake numbers with facility capacity; include the audit in the dossier.
- Secure written agreements with external venues for the mandatory practical components and possible clinical placements.

G. Professional certification pathway

- Consider pursuing programme recognition through Europe Active/EREPS Level 6-7 and the **NSCA Education Recognition Program**; adjust module content and practical hours per their matrices.
- Consider offering an optional and additional **Professional Certification Track** (additional 150–400 hours supervised practice + external exam), so graduates earn both the MSc and an industry credential.

H. Continuous improvement loop

- Integrate KPI monitoring, LO-attainment data, stakeholder feedback, and financial reports into a single annual quality report presented to the Programme Committee, MODIP, and Senate, with recorded actions for the following year.

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

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

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

Indicatively:

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

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

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

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

Documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the postgraduate study programme*
- *Special regulation for the implementation of e-learning if the PSP is delivered through distance methods*
- *Research Ethics Regulation*

- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Degree certificate template and Diploma Supplement template*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Programme "Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs" has a two-semester duration (75 ECTS credits in total) with tuition fees of 1,300 EUR per semester. Each year, scholarships can be awarded to students based on specific criteria, including a deprived socioeconomic background and high academic performance. Admission to the programme is conducted transparently following the Department's announcement of available places. All announcements are published on the PSP's official website (available at: <https://funex.phyed.duth.gr/>).

The students are selected based on their study scores, time for obtaining a degree, scientific publications, and a second university degree. Good knowledge of English is mandatory (B2 level). These procedures are clearly described in the required supporting documents. The number of students participating will be between 15 and 40 per year.

The student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment aspects of the PSP are demonstrated by a combination of in-person and online lectures, compulsory workshops, and a short master's thesis, which is written either in English or Greek. Students' assessments are carried out in multiple ways, including assignments and multiple-choice tests. During the summer period, students are expected to conduct original research and write up their research thesis.

Students are offered the possibility to engage with the Erasmus+ programme that facilitates international mobility. Upon completion of their studies, students are awarded a diploma certificate, showing their academic achievement. This can be used for further studies in higher education (e.g. a PhD studentship) or future career development.

II. Analysis

The PSP offers a great opportunity to develop functional exercise programmes in Greece, thereby addressing an important need for advanced higher education in the field of Sports Science. The current duration of the PSP studies (two semesters) combined with the very short master's thesis raised concerns among the EEAP members about students' ability to attain the necessary depth and complete their studies on schedule. The tuition fees were considered reasonably high, especially given the absence of costly consumables.

III. Conclusions

The PSP "Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs" offers an excellent opportunity to provide postgraduate studies to fitness instructors who wish to improve their employment competencies. The EEAP members believe that the duration of this PSP is somewhat insufficient, and the time allocated for conducting original research and writing the thesis is markedly limited.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP members suggest expanding the PSP duration by adding one more semester to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the thesis and to introduce research methodology (including principle in statistics) in the first semester. This is meant to replace the “summer period”.
- The EEAP members suggest a thorough reassessment of the tuition fee structure.

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

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

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

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

Documentation

- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment, policy for attracting highly qualified staff, and PSP Obligation Regulation*
- *List of the intended for recruitment teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin, Department of origin and relevant individual achievements*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Staff Adequacy and Scientific Competence: Detailed information is provided for all faculty members for the PSP, including their academic ranks [Professor, Assoc. Professor, Asst. Professor, PhD holder, Special Teaching Staff (ЕЕП)], and their subject areas. The individual biographies reinforce their credentials, specialisations, and academic/professional experience. It is evident that the majority of teaching staff lead high-level research, link research activity to educational quality, which suggests that competence is tied to scholarly output.

Appropriate Staff Categories and Subject Areas: The list includes a mix of professorial ranks and other qualified staff (PhD, ЕЕП), which are standard categories for university programmes in this thematic area. The listed subject areas are directly relevant to the "Individual and Group Programs of Functional Exercise" focus of the PSP, as confirmed by the course list (implicitly part of this documentation package) and the description of the PSP.

High Research Performance: The Department's emphasis on research is evident. The Department utilises internationally recognised metrics (Impact Factor, citations, h-index, using SCOPUS data), and provides both aggregate departmental data (total publications, publications in 5 years, average per person, total citations, citations per publication) and individual data for

PSP instructors in Table 1 (citations, total publications, h-index, 5-year publications). The data presented for most instructors shows significant research output and impact.

Evaluation of Teaching Work: There are installed mechanisms for evaluating teaching performance, including student evaluations using special forms and periodic monitoring by departmental bodies.

PSP Quality Assurance: There is an annual internal evaluation of the PSP in collaboration with the MODIP within the university's Internal Quality Assurance System framework.

Staff Development (Implied): While a formal *policy* is not detailed, the individual biographies mention participation in conferences, European programmes (Erasmus+ coordination), previous studies abroad, and professional certifications/training, suggesting periodic professional activity for most staff.

In the written reports there is no information on relevant procedures and criteria for *recruiting* teaching staff *specifically for the PSP*. Ideally, there should be a stated policy for *attracting* highly qualified staff, information regarding the staff-student ratio, a detailed, systematic policy for staff development, training, mobility schemes, or educational leaves. Also, there should be comprehensive quality assurance processes for *all* staff aspects (e.g., attendance, self-assessment) beyond the evaluation of teaching and research output. In addition, there should be policies or mechanisms specifically encouraging innovation in teaching methods or the use of new technologies. Some of this information was provided in oral presentations indicating that new faculty are recruited when positions are available through retirement of current faculty. However, there should be strategic planning for new recruitments and the possibility of using external faculty and lecturers to enrich the academic and research programmes.

II. Analysis

The provided documentation strongly demonstrates the adequacy, scientific competence, proper categories, and appropriate subject areas of the teaching staff, highlighting that most of them demonstrate high research performance. The documentation effectively conveys the Department's commitment to research quality, its methods for evaluating it using standard international metrics, and provides substantial quantitative data at both the departmental and individual levels. This indicates that the PSP is designed to be taught by highly qualified individuals who are active in their scientific fields and contributing to knowledge production, thereby strengthening the link between education and research as required by the principle. The evaluation mechanisms for teaching performance and overall PSP quality assurance also address aspects of the principle related to staff and programme quality monitoring.

However, the documentation falls short of fully addressing the principle's requirements regarding the processes and policies that underpin the acquisition and comprehensive development of this high-quality staff. While the *result* is evident (highly qualified staff), the text lacks details on:

- Recruitment and Attraction: There is no description of the specific procedures or criteria for recruiting staff *for this particular PSP*, nor a stated policy for *attracting* highly qualified individuals. This means it is not possible to judge whether the recruitment process is fair, objective, or specifically designed to bring in top talent for the programme.

- **Systematic Staff Development:** Although individual staff members list various professional development activities in their bios (conferences, projects, certifications), the information provided does not provide a systematic institutional or departmental *policy* or *programme* for providing ongoing training, supporting mobility schemes, or granting educational leaves to ensure continuous professional growth and the adoption of innovative practices. The mention of Erasmus+ coordination by some staff is a positive indicator of engagement, but it does not replace a stated policy for *all* staff development.
- **Comprehensive QA and Innovation:** The QA description focuses on teaching evaluation and overall programme review, but not on the broader QA of staff performance encompassing attendance, self-assessment, or ensuring staff are trained in innovative teaching methods or new technologies.

III. Conclusions

DUTH's PSP "Individual and Group Programs of Functional Exercise" demonstrates a high level of compliance regarding the adequacy and scientific competence of its teaching staff, their relevant subject expertise, and especially their high research performance, which is clearly measured and valued. Most staff members possess appropriate qualifications and contribute significantly to scientific output, effectively linking research with education.

However, the documentation provided is insufficient to conclude full compliance with the principle's requirements related to the formal procedures and policies governing staff recruitment and attraction, systematic staff development and training, the staff-student ratio (15 teachers:40 students), comprehensive staff quality assurance (beyond teaching and research output evaluation), and policies for fostering innovation in teaching. While the quality of the current staff is well-substantiated, the processes and policies that ensure this quality is consistently achieved, maintained, and developed over time are not adequately documented in the provided text. Information that was provided during oral presentations should be documented in written policies and procedures.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Overall the programme, from a staffing point of view, is well-established; the faculty are committed and prepared to launching this new graduate programme in September 2025 with enthusiasm. Based on similar programmes and the appeal of the thematic area, it is highly probable that the programme will be successful in attracting the maximum of desired students

(40) and grow beyond this number in future years. However, there are significant gaps in written policies and procedures to conclude full compliance with the principle's requirements related to the formal procedures and policies governing staff recruitment and attraction, systematic staff development and training, and policies for fostering innovation in teaching. Information that was provided during oral presentations should be documented in written policies and procedures.

- The EEAP members recommend changes in favour of a PSP-specific strategic plan, for the next five years, that includes focus on new or expanding thematic areas. In line with points discussed elsewhere in this report, the plan should include faculty evaluation, continued education, and hiring and retention practices based on anticipated retirements and new positions that may be available in the future. Plans may be made to convert the programme to the English language to attract foreign students.

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

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

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

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

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 includes 15 lecturers from the Department of Science of Physical Education and Sport (DUTH) and provides a well-rounded academic setting with access to up-to-date facilities. The institution has auditoriums, modern classrooms with distance learning possibilities, a dance hall, a video conference room, computer rooms, a multipurpose room equipped with training equipment, and multiple laboratories for practical training. Additionally, students have access to a library that supports students with e-services and free access to scientific journals and databases.

These facilities are complemented by advanced technical resources and edutech tools to support teaching. E-learning is facilitated through the e-Class platform, and commercially available video conferencing solutions. Postgraduate students are expected to receive all relevant information about the available services at the time of admission.

The adequately qualified teaching staff brings specialised knowledge in the scientific fields of the PSP. On administrative-organisational matters, students receive email accounts and access to e-learning platforms and digital tools. They can manage course registration, renewals, and applications through the online secretary services that support the PSP and Management Board. This system also manages financial matters and oversees all academic and administrative procedures from enrollment to graduation. Additionally, it streamlines student support and application processes.

The PSP is delivered both through in-person and online instructions. To support students, the Department has created a website (available at: <https://funex.phyed.duth.gr/>) where students can find detailed information on the curriculum, faculty, announcements, and any relevant events.

All structures related to academic life are set up to operate normally. In particular, services such as the Student Advocate, who assists with issues outside the scope of grades and exams; the Data Protection Officer, who provides guidance on personal data protection; the Office of Student Support for Students from Vulnerable Social Groups; the Counselling and Psychological Support Centre; the University Gym; and the University Campus are presented to be fully operational for a start on 1st September 2025.

Tuition fees amount to 2,600 EUR. The tuition utilisation plan is described extensively. Indicatively, 74.6% of the 70% of the revenue is allocated to support salary costs for staff.

II. Analysis

Each student is supported by an Academic Advisor who provides continuous guidance throughout their studies. The Department offers access to modern facilities that enhance the teaching and learning environment. Classrooms have various technological tools, including both hardware and software, enabling a dynamic and interactive educational experience, even for visiting students and individuals connecting remotely. Students also benefit from access to extensive digital services including e-libraries and online databases.

The PSP's services aim to support students throughout their academic journey. These services include career counselling and assistance with adapting to life in Komotini, for those visiting the city to study. The student Welfare Office is effectively managed and provides support for those facing financial and/or psychological challenges. To promote a balanced university-life experience, students are encouraged to make use of the various athletic and cultural facilities, all of which are fully accessible on-site including to individuals with mobility and other disabilities. The administrative staff of the PSP are highly trained, ensuring the efficient operation of all academic and support services. According to the current budget plan, a significant percentage of the tuition fee revenue supports salary costs for teaching staff.

III. Conclusions

The PSP "Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programs" has up-to-date modern facilities. At the same time, it provides students with access to sports and cultural activities, aiming to improve their lives outside of studies in Komotini. The Secretariat operates an electronic platform that provides comprehensive support to students engaged in distance learning, ensuring 100% accessibility and assistance.

The EEAP members expresses a concern regarding the amount of tuition fees, particularly because the major part of the income appears to be allocated to salary costs for teaching staff, rather than

being invested in enhancing teaching resources and educational tools.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP members recommend the tuition fee structure to be reviewed to ensure that a higher part of revenue is allocated to improve student needs including infrastructure.

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

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

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

The above comprise the assessment of:

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

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

Documentation

- The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) procedure for verifying whether the requirements of the Standards for Quality Accreditation of New PSP are met, as well as the procedure for organising and supporting their external evaluation procedures*
- Assessment and feedback mechanisms of the PSP strategy and quality targeting, and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

As this is a newly established PSP, no prior internal or external evaluations have been conducted. Consequently, there are currently no findings to report - monitoring activities have not yet commenced.

II. Analysis

Establishment and operation of existing and new Committees

A) Internal Evaluation Group

The Department has established and has been operating since 2007 an Internal Evaluation Group (abbreviated here as OMEA) of the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science, which is responsible for conducting the Department's evaluation process, coordinating and implementing the procedures defined in the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System in collaboration with DUTH's MODIP, as well as any other issue provided for in the applicable legislation and the regulations of the Institution. A corresponding OMEA, which will be responsible for conducting the evaluation, is also provided for the joint non-hellenophone undergraduate study programme (ΚΞΠΠΣ) at the same institution.

B) Curriculum Committee

A curriculum committee has been operating at the Department since 2008 to [a] monitor the implementation of the curriculum and coordinate the educational activities of the undergraduate curricula of all associated programmes, [b] draw up internal regulations and submit amendments for approval, and [c] submit proposals to the Department Assembly regarding the distribution of teaching work, the formation of the Internal Evaluation Group, and the upgrading of the PSP. A corresponding curriculum committee, responsible for implementing and coordinating educational activities, is also set-up for the joint undergraduate programme. This committee will consist of faculty members from both collaborating Departments.

C) Student Affairs Committee

The Department Assembly established the Student Affairs Committee, which has operated since 1994. It comprises three faculty members with alternates and has a three-year term. The Student Affairs Committee ensures the best operation of the Student Affairs Committee for the benefit of students and the convenience of the Department's teaching staff.

D) Internship Committee

The Internship Committee is a three-member committee appointed by the Department Assembly. It consists of the Internship Manager, who heads the committee, and two more members with respective alternate members.

E) Library Committee

The Library Committee is responsible for all actions related to the smooth operation of the Department's Library.

F) Erasmus+ Committee

The Department's General Assembly has appointed a faculty member as coordinator for the Erasmus+ programme. This person will be assisted by two additional faculty members responsible for supervising, organising, and coordinating the Department's incoming and outgoing mobility.

Research Groups

Under the supervision of the Director of the Physical Education and Sports Sciences Department, new research groups are expected to support ongoing research programmes and the development of interdisciplinary collaborations with other Departments in the home and partner universities as well as non-academic organisations, both domestic and foreign.

Evaluation of teaching work by students

Since 2009, the Department has organised procedures for evaluating the educational work of teaching staff using student-led questionnaires. The evaluation results are presented at the General Assembly and at a special information meeting addressed to all DUTH Departments. This process is part of the Internal Quality Assurance System of the DUTH. Students are invited to conduct an evaluation of teaching staff between the 8th and 11th teaching weeks of each semester. The relevant questionnaire is available in Greek and English.

Use of information and communication technologies

Alongside the PSP's formal website (<https://funex.phyed.duth.gr/>) the Department's website (<http://phyed.duth.gr>) and social media pages are up-to-date and appropriately presented to share useful information to students, future applicants, and third parties. Both websites are expected to get updated/maintained regularly by DUTH staff.

Connection with graduates/employers

The Department holds (for over 20 years) an annual reunion day event for graduates of the undergraduate study programme. In this event, research-themed meetings are carried out alongside networking activities, to support alumni pursue their career aspirations further. The Department disclosed their plan to launch an interactive online map, by the end of the first cohort, to be used as a promotional platform for PSP graduates who wish to connect with other professionals and clients nationally.

Connecting research and teaching

The PSP under review in Physical Education and Sports Sciences mandates students to complete a Master's thesis. These reports are expected to enrich the scientific outputs of the Department. It is worth noting that the Department publishes three (3) scientific journals, in Greek and English. At the same time, the Department organises an annual International Conference on Physical Education and Sports Sciences and two (2) specialised thematic Conferences related to the subject matter of the specific PSP.

Diploma supplement

Since 2014, the Department has been granting a Diploma Supplement for the Physical Education and Sports Science PPS in addition to the undergraduate degrees in Greek and English. Accordingly, graduates from the PSP under review will be granted a Master's award in "Personal & Group Functional Exercise Programs", provided in both Greek and English.

Establish criteria for the selection and development of teaching staff.

Based on information in the submitted documentation and the discussions the EEAP members had with teaching staff and DUTH officials, there is no clearly established systematic development procedure in place for the development of teaching staff.

The EEAP members recognise that the PSP is set up in line with Departmental and DUTH's policies and that teaching staff must adhere to current regulations and law for the optimal conduct of this PSP. It is worth noting that although an established development center (KEDIMA) is available, there is no obligation for individual members of staff to participate per se.

Communication of the Department's Quality Policy

The Quality Policy statement of the Department

(http://www.phyed.duth.gr/undergraduate/images/files/department/quality_policy.pdf) is in line with material specified in DUTH's Quality Manual available at: <https://duth.gr/Portals/0/---.pdf>.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the PSP is designed to have in place a range of systems for internal evaluation and a great amount of openness to receive external views. Despite the obstacles and difficulties created by limited resources and other external factors, the EEAP members conclude that the Department's cooperative spirit, reciprocity, respect and ethos are major enablers for robust academic, sportive and paedagogical outputs.

As this is newly established PSP without previous findings in this Principle, provided information justify that in this principle, the PSP proposal is 'substantially compliant'.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP members recommend:

- An enhanced design of mid- and long-term goals and perseverance to reach those in a timely manner.
- The Course Director and Leads to stay vigilant and open to identify trends and to take action every year by upgrading outdated areas.
- The development of a clear action plan and a tracker for adaptations and modifications to allow them effectively communicate change with third parties, when needed.
- The teaching staff must pay attention to the correct and advanced teaching of the human body and explain things in anatomical anthropological senses.
- The continuous development of teaching staff must continue in response to advanced programme's needs. The Course Director to engage in discussions with DUTH and the Department of Education to suggest the recruitment of new staff (both researchers and administrators).
- Collaboration with DUTH nutrition, rehabilitation, and medical professionals will be essential. For instance, a suggestion is to consider establishing a rehabilitation centre within the Department that promotes the PSP as well as helping athletes and patients to recover from injury or illness.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- An essential programme in the "Individual & Group Functional Exercise Programmes" field. This is, overall, an adequately-designed new PSP with expectations to meet high standards. The EEAP members recognise the teaching staff's firm commitment, concentrated efforts, and enthusiasm in achieving their goals.
- Clear procedural pathway. The Programme was developed and endorsed through the Department → MODIP → Senate sequence mandated by national legislation, demonstrating sound internal governance.
- Transparent workload design. All modules publish contact-hour tables and student workload calculations that respect the 25-hour / ECTS convention, facilitating realistic study planning and external comparability.
- Appropriately qualified core staff. Key lecturers in functional training hold strong research or professional records, enabling credible research-informed teaching in their specialist areas.
- Thesis-centred research component. A mandatory 15-ECTS Master's Thesis, assessed by public defence, provides every student structured experience in research design, data collection, data analysis, and scholarly communication.
- Functional learning infrastructure. Systematic use of the institutional LMS (e-Class) and commercially available digital tools for content delivery, assignment management, and online examinations to support blended learning practices, flexibility, and academic integrity.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Absence of SMART strategic targets. The "Stochothesia" document lists broad aspirations but no baselines, milestones, or KPI values, impeding systematic monitoring of programme performance.
- Limited research-methods scaffold. Only one 7.5-ECTS module covers measurement/analysis; there is no dedicated Advanced Research Methods & Biostatistics unit or staged mini-projects to prepare students for the thesis stage.
- Imbalanced curriculum breadth. Two full modules (15 ECTS) on Pilates outweigh critical domains such as group-exercise leadership, ageing/chronic disease exercise, and digital fitness technologies.
- Learning-outcome design alignment gaps. Several module LOs use level-6 wording ("to describe/to know"); a published matrix linking LOs to programme aims, assessments, and Dublin descriptors is missing, as are detailed rubrics for most modules.
- Stakeholder participation is undocumented. No minutes, surveys, or advisory board reports evidence of consultation with prospective students, alumni, or the fitness industry during programme design or revision.
- Staff-allocation inconsistencies. Discrepancies appear between the official staff list and individual syllabi; lecturers lead some modules with limited peer-reviewed output, and teaching loads cluster on a small core team.
- Resource audit lacking. The dossier provides no evidence that specialised facilities (Pilates apparatus, functional-training equipment, lab space) and budget can sustain the cohort size

and practical workload.

- Pedagogical innovation & continuous professional development (CPD) understated. The submission cites e-learning tools but no plan for flipped/inquiry-based teaching or ongoing staff development in digital pedagogy and learning outcome assessment.
- The one-year (12 month) duration of the course can be challenging unless timelines are clearly communicated to students including having a third semester for the thesis. It is questionable how feasible the delivery of the PSP can be over 12 months.
- Limited access to central resources / difficulty to secure new funds for research.
- Somewhat limited academic publications of original research to scientific journals.
- Relations with external stakeholders are not institutionalised as the programme is not running yet.
- Room for small-group student meetings is rather limited.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Principle 1:

- Consider involving prospective students in the programme's design and presentation (the extent of involvement to be agreed upon by the Course Director and Course Leads) in the next couple of years; the purpose is to ensure that student voices are heard, and that any unmet educational and professional needs are addressed sooner than later.
- Consider performing a detailed audit in the next couple of years to assess if the current number of postgraduate students is indeed sustainable and appropriate for the professional needs of individuals (re)entering the job market as graduates.
- Consider developing new/strengthening existing links with policy-makers from the Prefecture of Thrace, the Greek Ministry of Health, and the Greek Ministry of Education; the suggestion is to deliver new workshops (to be held remotely or face-to-face) with colleagues from other academic institutions from Greece and abroad, including initiatives with international organisations, including but not limited to partnerships with Egyptian Academic community, and home Institutions such as the School of Health Sciences at DUTH.
- Consider hosting an annual event (e.g. a summer festival over 2-3 days every year) in the Komotini campus to: [a] engage with individuals (of all ages) and families with children from the local community who are interested in participating in community work, [b] attract new students, [c] engage with minority communities in Thrace aiming to promote inclusion, and [d] seek support from local communities e.g., if you are recruiting research participants / if you are in need of connections with housing associations to support visiting students.

- Consider revising your strategic PSP plan and implementing actions for new sources of funding (including donations, if applicable) to: [a] improve current infrastructure, [b] repair and maintain equipment and any damage in infrastructure, and [c] take all necessary health and safety measures to safeguard students and staff from catastrophic events (including wildfires, earthquakes, and floods).

Principle 2:

A. Strategic alignment QA targets

- Draft and publish a SMART KPI grid that links Programme aims to the University strategy and MODIP dashboard (e.g., student satisfaction $\geq 4.2/5$, research output ≥ 1.2 papers/FTE/year, graduate employment $\geq 80\%$ within 6 months).
- Add a formal commitment clause in the Quality Policy (document A6) that holds the Department accountable for policy implementation and the efficient use of fee income; include an annual public financial report.

B. Curriculum rebalance and academic depth

- Merge the two Pilates modules into one 7.5 ECTS elective and introduce:
 - Advanced Research Methods & Biostatistics (7.5 ECTS, Semester A)
 - Exercise for Ageing & Chronic Disease (7.5 ECTS)
 - Group-Training Leadership & Digital Fitness (7.5 ECTS)
- Embed a "research spiral"—mini-projects or systematic reviews in every taught module—to scaffold thesis readiness.

C. Learning outcomes, assessment & transparency

- Rewrite all module LOs with level-7 verbs (critically evaluate, synthesise, innovate) and publish a mapping matrix: Module LO $\rightarrow$ Programme LO $\rightarrow$ Dublin descriptor $\rightarrow$ Assessment task.
- Produce and post rubrics for every assessment showing each LO's evaluation criteria; report annual LO-attainment statistics to MODIP.

D. Teaching innovation and staff development

- Launch a CPD programme (workshops, micro-credentials) on flipped classrooms, project-based learning, learning analytics, and AR/VR exercise applications.
- Cap individual thesis supervision to maintain research-led quality; recruit or engage a biostatistician to co-teach Research Methods and advise theses.

E. Stakeholder participation and market relevance

- Establish a Stakeholder Advisory Board with future students, alumni, gym/clinic managers, and professional bodies; meet annually and archive minutes.
- Conduct structured surveys of students, graduates, and employers; integrate findings into the three-year curriculum review cycle.

F. Resource planning and feasibility

- Complete a resource audit (laboratories, Pilates apparatus, IT, budget) and align intake numbers with facility capacity; include the audit in the dossier.
- Secure written agreements with external venues for the mandatory practical components and possible clinical placements.

G. Professional certification pathway

- Consider pursuing programme recognition through Europe Active/EREPS Level 6-7 and the NSCA Education Recognition Program; adjust module content and practical hours per their matrices.
- Consider offering an optional and additional Professional Certification Track (additional 150–400 hours supervised practice + external exam), so graduates earn both the MSc and an industry credential.

H. Continuous improvement loop

- Integrate KPI monitoring, LO-attainment data, stakeholder feedback, and financial reports into a single annual quality report presented to the Programme Committee, MODIP, and Senate, with recorded actions for the following year.

Principle 3:

- The EEAP members suggest expanding the PSP duration by adding one more semester to allow

sufficient time for the preparation of the thesis and to introduce research methodology (including principle in statistics) in the first semester. This is meant to replace the “summer period”.

- The EEAP members suggest a thorough reassessment of the tuition fee structure.

Principle 4:

- Overall the programme, from a staffing point of view, is well-established; the faculty are committed and prepared to launching this new graduate programme in September 2025 with enthusiasm. Based on similar programmes and the appeal of the thematic area, it is highly probable that the programme will be successful in attracting the maximum of desired students (40) and grow beyond this number in future years. However, there are significant gaps in written policies and procedures to conclude full compliance with the principle's requirements related to the formal procedures and policies governing staff recruitment and attraction, systematic staff development and training, and policies for fostering innovation in teaching. Information that was provided during oral presentations should be documented in written policies and procedures.
- The EEAP members recommend changes in favour of a PSP-specific strategic plan, for the next five years, that includes focus on new or expanding thematic areas. In line with points discussed elsewhere in this report, the plan should include faculty evaluation, continued education, and hiring and retention practices based on anticipated retirements and new positions that may be available in the future. Plans may be made to convert the programme to the English language to attract foreign students.

Principle 5:

- The EEAP members recommend the tuition fee structure to be reviewed to ensure that a higher part of revenue is allocated to improve student needs including infrastructure.

Principle 6:

The EEAP members recommend:

- An enhanced design of mid- and long-term goals and perseverance to reach those in a timely manner.
- The Course Director and Leads to stay vigilant and open to identify trends and to take action every year by upgrading outdated areas.
- The development of a clear action plan and a tracker for adaptations and modifications to allow them effectively communicate change with third parties, when needed.
- The teaching staff must pay attention to the correct and advanced teaching of the human body and explain things in anatomical anthropological senses.
- The continuous development of teaching staff must continue in response to advanced programme's needs. The Course Director to engage in discussions with DUTH and the Department of Education to suggest the recruitment of new staff (both researchers and administrators).
- Collaboration with DUTH nutrition, rehabilitation, and medical professionals will be essential. For instance, a suggestion is to consider establishing a rehabilitation centre within the Department that promotes the PSP as well as helping athletes and patients to recover from injury or illness.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 3, 5

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved

are: 1, 4, 6 The Principles where partial compliance has been

achieved are: 2

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: 0

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
Andreas A. Roussakis	Signed by Andreas A. Roussakis
Panagiotis Karanis	Signed by Panagiotis Karanis
George Panayiotou	Signed by George Panayiotou
Konstantin GusKousoulas	Signed by Konstantin GusKousoulas
Valentini Tzimogianni	Signed by Valentini Tzimogianni