



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • F. +30 210 9220 143 • E. secretariat@ethaee.gr • www.ethaee.gr

Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Master in Political Communication and Political Marketing

Department: Political Science
Institution: Democritus University of Thrace
Date: June 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 **Master in Political
Communication and Political Marketing** of the **Democritus University
of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile	6
Part B: Compliance with the Principles.....	7
Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes	7
Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	10
Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification	13
Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	17
Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support	20
Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	23
Part C: Conclusions	25
I. Features of Good Practice.....	25
II. Areas of Weakness.....	25
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions.....	25
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment.....	26

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 **Master in Political Communication and Political Marketing** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. GIANNAKOS SYMEON (Chair)**
Salve Regina University
- 2. FOKAS NIKOS**
Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)
- 3. Kyriakopoulos Irene**
National Defense University, Washington, DC, USA
- 4. Papadopoulos Fotios**
University of the Peloponnese
- 5. VAMVAKAS PETROS**
Emmanuel College

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Upon receiving its mandate from the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE), the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) communicated via email to set the agenda for its first official meeting, arranged by HAHE for Monday, June 16, 2025. The EAP panel discussed its responsibilities, processes, and functions while delineating a plan for its visit. The EAP members had already reviewed the digital materials uploaded by HAHE to its electronic platform and made available to the EEAP. Immediately after the official meeting, the EEAP met with the Vice Rector, and the Chair of the Department of Political Science, which will house the proposed postgraduate programs. It should be noted that this visit involved the concurrent evaluation and accreditation review of two proposed programs: National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management, and Master's in Political Communications and Political Marketing. As such, each proposed program's director also attended the meeting. The Department Chair presented an overview of the department, and each director gave a slide presentation on their proposed program. Subsequently, this report focuses only on the Political Administration and Political Marketing Program program, which is planned to be offered in a hybrid format (partially online and partially in person).

The following day, on June 17, the EEAP met with the teaching staff of the Political Science Department. The meeting was characterized with frank and productive discussion about curricular and faculty professional development and research. Following this meeting, the EEAP had an online tour about the facilities, student services, and logistical support for online teaching.

The next meeting of the EAP was with the potential employees and social partners of the proposed program, and it was an engaging and fruitful conversation. After this, the EAP held a private debriefing meeting to prepare for the closure meeting with the Vice Rector, the MODIP Manager, the Department Chair, and the Director of the proposed program. This meeting was conducted in a collegial and productive manner. The entire process took place in a friendly atmosphere, which indicated that the university recognized the value of the evaluation and accreditation process.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The Department of Political Science at the Democritus University of Thrace was created in 2009. After it underwent a merger period with two other departments, it was re-established in 2019 as an independent department. The University of Thrace is located in the periphery of Greece, bordering Turkey and Bulgaria, and includes a sizable Muslim minority. It is connected to the sea with the port of Alexandroupolis, which has emerged as a strategic location due to the war in Ukraine, transforming the region into a significant hub for communications, trade, and energy transportation. In this context, the proposed program can be a key to the region's political development.

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

With its decision 25/97/16-11-2023, the Senate of Democritus University of Thrace sets the development of Postgraduate Study Programs as a strategic goal. The university's postgraduate programs aim to promote original scientific research and contribute substantially to advancing knowledge.

The proposed program is in sync with the university's strategic planning. It aims to provide a valuable service to the region of Thrace and Greece in advancing specific knowledge, developing research, and contributing to the development of the region.

The proposed program's quality assurance policy aligns fully with the University's and emphasizes continuous improvement in all education, research, and administration aspects.

The aims and objectives of the Department's Quality Policy were formulated by considering the relevant guidelines of HAHE, the teaching and research goals of the university, and involving all Department faculty and potential stakeholders. The proposed program's plan to be offered online meets the Institution's guidelines and regulations regarding graduate studies, and the logistical infrastructure for online education is in place.

In general terms, the program is committed to continuous improvement, aligning itself with the home department's quality assurance, facilitating faculty research, connecting research and teaching, contributing to graduate placements, and adjusting the number of graduates to match faculty availability and market demand.

II. Analysis

The quality assurance procedures are subject to periodic evaluation, which is carried out by the Steering Program Committee and OMEA, in collaboration with MODIP of the University. The General Assembly of the Department makes the final decisions.

The program benefits from informal feedback from external stakeholders, including those with strong connections to state institutions, for its development and ongoing improvement. The program has uploaded the quality assurance policy on the department's website and plans to inform potential and admitted students of the need for quality assurance and their role in the process. EClass will facilitate online education, and the Department is well-connected to local and regional agencies for promoting the program and getting feedback.

III. Conclusions

The proposed program is in full compliance with Principle 1.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

As with any new program, it is necessary to re-evaluate the program after a year of operations and take stock of its strengths and weaknesses.

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.

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 Program in Political Communication and Political Marketing aims to promote academic knowledge and research in political communication and marketing. The integration of new tools like artificial intelligence, along with a balanced focus on both theory and practice, is instrumental. The program lasts three semesters and totals 90 ECTS, with 30 ECTS per semester. During the first two semesters, students will complete three mandatory courses and four elective courses chosen from a list of nine options. In the third semester, students will either write a thesis or complete a two-month practicum, which can also be part of an Erasmus program. The program structure and courses are clearly outlined, with 70% being online and 30% face-to-face, ensuring students experience the culture of Thrace and the campus in Komotini.

Attendance and successful completion of assignments and tests are mandatory for students to progress and continue in their course of study. The coursework is also supplemented with lectures, seminars, and panels outside of the classroom, taking advantage of the extensive expertise available at both participating universities in this cross-university program. The curriculum's nature further encourages collaboration between academics and practitioners.

II. Analysis

The proposed program is a creative and focused program for those who want to combine theoretical knowledge with a deeper understanding and a more sophisticated approach in political communication and marketing. This program has a wider appeal for mid-career professionals but also provides essential communication skills for graduate students seeking to go beyond the areas currently available in graduate programs in Greece.

The Program clearly complies with this Principle and the outlined points, as it is student-centered, integrating research with education, especially since it deliberately emphasizes the "in-practice" component. This is highlighted by the fact that a 2-month practicum is equated with a 30 ECTS thesis, giving students the option to choose either. The program, as designed, already aligns with established institutional and European standards.

III. Conclusions

Political marketing and communication are two fields that are currently undergoing significant restructuring, as strategy and communication are key components of political professionalism, and innovations like artificial intelligence offer exciting new possibilities. It is a valuable initiative for the department to introduce such a program, as it would help the newly established department

establish an immediate, distinctive identity. The Panel fully recognizes and appreciates that this program has great potential as an appealing offer for those already involved in communication or politics. The program complies fully with principle 2.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should develop a clearer future plan with specific aims and goals.
Consider the expansion of the English curriculum to make the program more attractive to a broader range of students and faculty.

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 PSP is governed by a comprehensive internal regulatory framework in accordance with Law 4957/2022 and the guidelines of the HAHE. These regulations cover all stages of study, including admission criteria, student rights and responsibilities, academic progression, thesis or internship options, and the issuance of certificates and diploma supplements in both Greek and English.

The PSP is offered through a blended learning format, combining online and in-person elements. A formal e-learning regulation outlines the PSP's institutional digital infrastructure. Student authentication methods, platform access, and academic support services are established.

Student integration and progression are supported by a structured, multi-phase strategy that includes orientation events, mentoring assignments, and skills training in digital tools and academic methodology. Monitoring academic progress is conducted through summative assessments, formative participation, mentoring sessions, and periodic statistical analysis by the PSP's coordinating committee.

It is of great importance that the PSP provides the option to either complete a Master's thesis or undertake a supervised internship.

Additionally, a thesis handbook is available that outlines the main academic and formal requirements. However, it remains mainly descriptive and does not include visual models, layout examples, or templates. As a result, while it offers a general framework, it lacks visual content that could help students understand better and promote standardization.

Scholarships and awards for excellence are awarded based on transparent and merit-based criteria, encompassing academic, social, and economic aspects. The Diploma Supplement is issued automatically and at no cost.

The PSP participates in Erasmus+ and other mobility programs through DUTH's extensive network of agreements. Notably, the PSP's connection with the EMERGE alliance (as reported to the Panel by the PSP's authorities) represents an important opportunity for gradual internationalization and collaborative academic growth.

Stakeholders affirmed the PSP's importance to labor market needs, emphasizing its ability to connect political science education with the practical field of political communication and marketing.

II. Analysis

The PSP is governed by clear and transparent internal regulations covering every

stage of the student academic lifecycle. It offers effective mechanisms to support student admission, guidance, progress monitoring, thesis development, and certification. The blended approach to delivering PSP's courses is pedagogically suitable and institutionally endorsed.

The thesis handbook, while available, could be significantly improved. The current content is mainly descriptive and lacks visual or structural guidance. Including templates (such as title pages, tables of contents), formatting examples, citation models, and annotated outlines would give students clearer direction and promote greater consistency in submissions.

Furthermore, the PSP demonstrates a growing engagement with both national and international academic networks. Its integration of professional practice, whether through internships or applied thesis topics (which involve hands-on research), enhances its societal relevance and focus on employability.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is fully compliant with Principle 3.

It has established a comprehensive and effective regulatory framework that appears to ensure academic quality and institutional accountability at all stages of postgraduate studies.

It demonstrates strong engagement with both national and international academic networks. Its incorporation of professional practice, whether through internships or applied thesis topics involving hands-on research, enhances its societal relevance and focus on employability.

The dual pathway model (thesis or internship) in the final stage of studies, along with structured support mechanisms and the increasing international focus of the program, further enhance its academic and societal reputation.

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 current thesis handbook should be improved with a more distinctive and visually organized presentation. This could include templates for formatting, annotated examples, and visual aids illustrating the thesis structure. Such an improvement would provide clearer

guidance for students and help ensure consistency and higher academic standards in thesis submissions.

The PSP is encouraged to establish formal cooperation agreements with professional organizations and political communication institutions to strengthen the internship pathway as a solid academic option.

Strategic use of the EMERGE alliance should persist, especially in advancing student and staff mobility and in the possible co-creation of joint courses or double degrees.

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

The Department of Political Science has created a new graduate program focused on Political Communication and Political Marketing, to be taught by department members. The Department affirms its commitment to long-standing, merit-based criteria and procedures for recruiting and developing the teaching staff. It explicitly states that it will verify the knowledge and skills of the faculty and will implement fair, transparent processes for recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development, starting in fall 2025 when the new PSP classes begin.

The new PSP will be taught by a faculty of five Assistant Professors from the Department of Political Science. The plan also includes two additional teaching staff members, both holding Ph.D. degrees. The maximum number of incoming students is set at 45. The faculty have a diverse range of specializations, including political and historical sociology, political theory and the state, quantitative methods of party and political systems, ethics and political philosophy, and comparative politics. Courses to be offered include: Political Sociology and Comparative Politics; Political Ideologies and Political Speech; Crisis Management and Political Communication; Research Methodology; Data Analysis; Rhetoric and Critical Political Communication; Communication Strategy and Political

Marketing; Digital Political Marketing; Mass Media and Politics; Greek Politics and Political Communication; and American Political Parties and Communication Strategies.

Faculty teaching in the new PSP are expected to use various teaching methods as appropriate; serve students as mentors and advisors; offer student counseling, both formal and informal; assess student progress; follow best practices when handling student complaints within a climate of respect, collaboration, and inclusivity; and participate in academic, administrative, and representational activities. Faculty will be encouraged to collaborate with national and international institutions on research projects and programs that support professional development and strengthen the connection between teaching and research.

II. Analysis

Since this PSP will not begin until fall 2025, the scope of reviewing faculty recruitment, hiring, retention, training, and professional development processes is quite limited. The Department specifically states that it will verify the knowledge and skills of the teaching staff and ensure fair and transparent processes for recruitment, training, and further professional development. Evidence supporting these commitments will be available once the program is operational. In at least one area, faculty development, the Panel understood that Department funds for faculty development remain very limited.

The faculty responsible for teaching this PSP in Political Communication and Political Marketing has strong credentials. Their research achievements are well documented. Data provided to the Panel show that over the past five years, the faculty produced a total of 78 publications, with 463 citations. This is a notable research output for a relatively junior faculty, as all members are Assistant Professors. During the interview, it was clear to the Panel that the faculty are preparing for the new PSP with a high level of enthusiasm and energy.

There are two related challenges to successfully launching and establishing the new PSP. The first concerns faculty workload, which will be managed by 5 faculty members (plus two new hires in the future) teaching a maximum of 45 incoming students. For comparison, another PSP (National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management) offered by the Department of Political Science involves a faculty team of 12 teaching up to 31 students. This imbalance in academic workload should not be overlooked. The second challenge arises from the current faculty rank structure, where the absence of senior or tenured professors is notable. The Panel understands, as explained thoroughly by the faculty during interviews, the reasons behind the present rank structure.

Still, the new PSP would significantly benefit if the two prospective hires were recruited externally from senior academics and/or practitioners with substantial expertise in political communications. Their role would be to provide strong program leadership, enhance program visibility, foster professional networking,

and facilitate meaningful interactions with regional and national partners and stakeholders.

III. Conclusions

The new PSP on Political Communications and Political Marketing has the potential to excel because of a talented faculty who possess knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for launching the program in Fall 2025. The faculty has demonstrated excellence in active scholarship and research across various dimensions of the subject, both theoretical and applied. The upcoming addition of two more faculty members can play an important role in balancing faculty workload. The Department of Political Science's decision to charge tuition for the graduate program should lead to increased funding support for faculty professional development, including productive interactions with public and private entities at regional and national levels. However, the absence of senior faculty is notable. The Panel's judgment for this principle is for substantial compliance.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department of Political Science should adopt the staffing model of the PSP on National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management by hiring a few external, senior-level specialists with strong ties to the public and/or private sectors, or senior academics from other universities with established reputations and expertise. Their role would be to provide strong program leadership, increase visibility, and foster networking and collaboration with regional partners and stakeholders. Potential benefits could include internships for program graduates and additional funding support for faculty development.

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 Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) in Political Communication and Political Marketing at Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) uses a blended learning approach, combining face-to-face and live online classes.

The Department of Political Science at Democritus University of Thrace was founded in 2019. It offers an undergraduate program in “Political Science” with no specializations.

The Department’s facilities are situated on the Komotini University Campus.

The Department's large lecture hall and seminar rooms are suitable for both distance and hybrid education. They are equipped with modern infrastructure.

II. Analysis

The Postgraduate Study Program in Political Communication and Political Marketing places particular emphasis on:

- fostering a strong linkage between teaching and research activities
- monitoring the professional placement and career advancement of its graduates, while actively disseminating relevant career-related information to its students
- ensuring the regular updating of its official website so that it remains a reliable and up-to-date source of information
- providing scholarships and awards for academic excellence
- promoting outward-looking initiatives through collaborations both within the institution and with academic entities in Greece and abroad.

Since many instructors are actively involved in the industry, the program's main competitive edge is that each course is overseen by an academic coordinator, with ongoing — not occasional — participation from industry professionals. The program will also invite external collaborators who possess a doctoral degree.

Students at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) can anonymously evaluate through relevant platforms:

- the educational process
- catering and housing services
- the digital services
- the available infrastructure
- the administrative procedures provided.

DUTH students may also make use of the following institutional bodies:

- Student Ombudsman
- Committee on Gender Equality and the Elimination of Discrimination

DUTH offers a comprehensive range of student support services, including:

- The implementation of the Academic Advisor system
- The Complaints Management mechanism, whose aim is to ensure the continuous improvement of the quality of services provided by the Academic Departments
- The complaints and appeals policy, which addresses the entire active student population
- Students are informed in writing by the Committee on Student Affairs through the Secretariat of their respective Department.

Students are also offered:

- the opportunity to undertake internships in public and private sector organizations
- the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus+ program for internships abroad.

III. Conclusions

The PSP in Political Communication and Political Marketing is dedicated to improving its curriculum continuously through transparent processes and the active participation of all key stakeholders. It aims to synchronize its educational approach with current academic standards and changing pedagogical needs.

The program aims to strike a well-calibrated balance between rigorous theoretical teaching and the practical use of political communication methods and tools.

Moreover, it aims to develop students' social skills by promoting active learning and encouraging teamwork and collaboration. The program fully complies with this principle.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Collaboration with social partners shows that the program is well integrated into the local community. This could be further improved by gradually increasing the share of in-person teaching hours.

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

HAHE's digital material provided to the EAP includes the program's proposal, which contains details regarding its formulation, deliberations, and approval. Specifically, the approval process underwent a series of sequential steps. First, it was introduced to the department's faculty assembly. From there, it was presented to the University Committee for Postgraduate Studies, which then forwarded it to the university senate, which, in turn, sent it to MODIP and subsequently to HAHE. MODIP was involved at all stages of the process, and the

department seemed completely aware and cognizant of the significance and importance of the internal and external evaluation process.

One of EAP's meetings was with the external stakeholders, who were completely aware of the program's academic value and well informed of its curriculum and structure.

The procedure for utilizing the outcome of the external evaluation process is in place, and the program director appreciated the debriefing feedback provided by the EAP.

As mentioned above, this is a new program; thus, this was the first external evaluation and accreditation process it underwent. The EAP is unaware of any other external evaluation the program may have undergone.

II. Analysis

Both the department and the institutions have established the internal and external quality assurance systems and have communicated the initiation, creation, and approval processes to all concerned parties.

III. Conclusions

The program underwent all internal and external quality assurance processes and complies fully with Principle 6.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

No recommendations

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The proposed program, the department, and the University exhibit strong qualities in teaching, research, and service:

- The quality of faculty is robust. The faculty is committed to the welfare of the students and their education.
- The faculty records substantial research output, instrumental to effective teaching.
- The quality of research is strong.
- The University provides all the basic services necessary for students' academic life.
- The Administrative support of the proposed program is small but effective.
- The proposed program and university are strategically located to provide valuable educational services to the immediate region and beyond.
- Stakeholders are highly supportive of the proposed program.

II. Areas of Weakness

The relatively junior composition of the teaching faculty in the program is notable.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- As with any new program, it is necessary to re-evaluate the program after a year of operations and take stock of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The Department should develop a clearer future plan with specific aims and goals.
- Consider the expansion of the English curriculum to make the program more attractive to a broader range of students and faculty.
- Collaboration with social partners demonstrates that the program is deeply embedded in the local community. This could be further strengthened by gradually increasing the proportion of in-person teaching hours.
- Leveraging of the EMERGE alliance should continue, particularly in promoting student and staff mobility and in the potential co-design of joint courses or double degrees.
- The existing thesis handbook could be enriched with a more characteristic and visually structured presentation. This could include formatting templates, annotated examples, and graphical aids outlining the thesis structure. Such an enhancement would ensure greater clarity for students and support the uniformity and academic quality of thesis submissions.
- The Department of Political Science should adopt the staffing model of the PSP on National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management by hiring a few external, senior-level specialists with strong ties to the public and/or private sectors, or senior academics from other universities with established reputations and expertise. Their role would be to provide strong program leadership, increase visibility, and foster networking and collaboration with

regional partners and stakeholders. Potential benefits could include internships for program graduates and additional funding support for faculty development.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

One (1), Two (2), Three (3), Five (5), Six (6).

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Four (4).

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

None

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
GIANNAKOS SYMEON	Signed by GIANNAKOS SYMEON
FOKAS NIKOS	Signed by FOKAS NIKOS
Kyriakopoulos Irene	Signed by Kyriakopoulos Irene
Papadopoulos Fotios	Signed by Papadopoulos Fotios
VAMVAKAS PETROS	Signed by VAMVAKAS PETROS