



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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for Higher Education

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Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management

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 **National Security,**
Intelligence and Crisis Management of the **Democritus University of**
Thrace for the purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new postgraduate study programme of **National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management** 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 National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management program, which is planned to be offered exclusively online.

The following day, on June 17, the EEAP met with the teaching staff of the Political Science Department along with adjunct cooperating faculty from Panteion University and the University of Athens. 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 and provide a needed service for state security.

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 developmental and security needs 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 follows all the guidelines and policies pertinent to quality assurance for establishing and delivering itself online.

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 proposed Program is designed so that it fills a gap of knowledge in a very significant area of international relations namely that of national security, intelligence and crisis management. In addition the locus of the program being the Democritus University in Thrace is equally significant for the designers of the program. The program is designed as a completely online program as it aims to primarily serve a population of mid-career professionals, and as such timing and access flexibility is important. The program is designed to be a three semester 90 ECTS, which will include a thesis, which will be 30 ECTS. The first two semesters have specific course work, which emphasizes the areas of security, comparative politics, intelligence, and international relations. The aim is to also bring the students in contact with practitioners in the field. The program has a unique feature, which is most of the faculty teaching in the program are not based in the department, where the program is housed and as such it presents a completely unique feature. This could be an advantage for the program as the faculty identified to teach in the program bring a great deal of experience and relevant background. However, this takes away from the aim of having a program based in a department beyond Athens as stated by the aims of the program designers. The structure of the curriculum follows is in line with institutional strategies, European standards, and in demand by external stakeholders, who would welcome the focus of the Program as indicated by its title.

The duration of the Program is three semesters and 90 ECTS total, 30 each semester. During each of the first two semesters, the student will take compulsory and elective courses, from a relatively small list of electives. In the third semester, the student will be responsible for a 30 ECTS master's thesis which is required. It should be noted that during the first semester the student is also required to attend a 12-hour long thesis preparation seminar, for 0 ECTS. Each course has 39 teaching hours per semester with variations of ECTS received. The overall Program of study has a total of 90 ECTS, which is certainly in line with compliance of similar program.

Attendance and successful completion of assignments and tests is compulsory for students to advance and continue in their course of study. The course work is also complemented with lectures, seminars and panels outside of the classroom, while taking advantage of the wide expertise available in both participating Universities, in this cross-university Program and by the nature of the curriculum, which brings academics and practitioners together.

II. Analysis

The proposed program aims to fill a recognized gap in the Greek higher education system's post-graduate offerings. It emphasizes the need for a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the constantly evolving and increasingly significant geopolitical aspect of international relations, as well as

the role of intelligence and crisis management. While having the program in Thrace is a positive step, it is largely symbolic, as the program is in Thrace in name only. The program largely meets this principle and the outlined points, as it is student- centered, blends research with education, and is deliberately focused on the "in- practice" component, while following established institutional and European standards.

III. Conclusions

This department and the program aim to address a gap in national security, intelligence, and crisis management for mid-career professionals and others interested in the field. The urgency to develop such a program was clearly emphasized by the presenters. Opting for an exclusively online format allows the program to be launched immediately and enables participation from a broader range of professors and students. Although the panel fully understands and appreciates the department members' point that they plan to consider offering face-to-face courses in the future, it would be beneficial to include specific 2-year, 5-year, and 10-year projections with clear goals and expectations. Additionally, this is the perfect time to develop a program that not only addresses past gaps but also meets future expectations.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Consider adjusting the program in a way that it contributes more directly to the region's development in a physical way.

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 has developed and published an internal regulatory framework in alignment with legal and procedural requirements set out by Greek legislation (notably Act no 4957/2022) and the HAHE guidelines. The relevant documentation that was provided by the PSP's competent authorities outlines all core aspects of the academic lifecycle and especially the following: student admission, enrolment, progression, student mobility, thesis drafting, degree recognition, and award certification.

The PSP will be operating via distance learning, and a dedicated e-learning regulation is in place, detailing course development, technological infrastructure, assessment methods, and student authentication systems. This regulation encompasses course design methodology, instructional delivery, technological infrastructure, identity verification, and academic integrity measures. The use of certified teleconferencing infrastructure and learning platforms (e.g., Microsoft TEAMS, e-Class, DUTHnet) supports effective implementation.

Student rights and obligations are codified and communicated transparently, while progression is monitored through structured semester assessments. The allocation of ECTS credits is rational and consistent across the curriculum, adhering to the relevant European Qualifications Framework (EQF Level 7). The diploma supplement is issued in both Greek and English without the need for a student request.

A thesis handbook is available and offers general guidance on the structure and formal requirements of the final dissertation. However, it was noted during the panel's review that the handbook could be improved through the inclusion of a more useful and visually explicit presentation, featuring exemplars such as templates for cover pages, tables of contents, referencing systems, and layout formatting.

Interviews with both academic staff and external stakeholders confirmed the PSP's strong relevance to national strategic needs. It engages actively with key public institutions, including ministries and national security agencies. As it was reported to the panel, plans to formalize these collaborations through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) are already under discussion, with the aim of enhancing practical training and employability outcomes. Additionally, stakeholders affirmed the societal relevance of the PSP and its potential to create a talent pool for institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat for National Security.

II. Analysis

The internal regulations governing the PSP are comprehensive, compliant, and publicly disseminated. Admission procedures are clearly defined and are accompanied by relevant documentation requirements. Student progression is

formally monitored through continuous and summative assessments, and degree recognition is regulated in accordance with national standards.

The distance learning regulation is well-developed and includes mechanisms to ensure academic integrity and student authentication, while also supporting staff through infrastructure and training. It is also remarkable that the PSP makes specific and appropriate provisions for students facing disability, illness, or other exceptional circumstances, ensuring equitable participation.

The thesis handbook, while meeting basic expectations, would benefit from revision aimed at increasing its clarity and usability. For instance, the integration of sample templates, visual guides, and structured formatting models would offer students a more accessible and intuitive tool, reducing ambiguities and promoting consistency in thesis presentation.

Feedback from the academic and professional community confirmed that the PSP fills a gap in postgraduate education in Greece, aligning academic offerings with state and societal needs in a rapidly evolving geopolitical context. The emphasis on interactivity with social partners, and the practical relevance of the training offered, enhances both the quality and employability of graduates.

III. Conclusions

The PSP demonstrates full compliance with the requirements of Principle 3. It is governed by a transparent regulatory framework covering all phases of postgraduate study. The presence of detailed internal and e-learning regulations, combined with well-defined academic processes, provides assurance of quality and integrity throughout the academic lifecycle. The PSP's structure, student monitoring, and certification mechanisms are consistent with European and national standards.

Its strategic collaborations, practical relevance, and tailored academic focus enhance both its academic credibility and its societal impact. While the current thesis handbook serves its basic function, its improvement through structural enrichment is strongly recommended to further support student success and academic coherence.

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 thesis handbook should be improved mainly by adding more visual and structural elements, such as templates, examples, and graphical guides for formatting. An more illustrative presentation would definitely boost students' understanding of the required and expected standards and promote consistency across theses.

The PSP should move forward with formalizing cooperation agreements (MoUs) with public institutions involved in national security and crisis management. This will strengthen its relevance and improve opportunities for internships or field-based training.

Regular updates of the PSP's regulatory and academic documents are advised to maintain consistent alignment with national legislation, quality assurance procedures, and pedagogical advancements.

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 introduced a new graduate program in National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management. It emphasizes its commitment to longstanding, merit-based criteria and procedures for hiring and developing teaching staff. The Department affirms it will assess the knowledge and skills of its faculty and implement fair, transparent processes for recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development, starting in fall 2025, which is when the new PSP classes will begin. The entire program is offered online.

The new PSP will be taught by a faculty of 12: one Assistant Professor, two Associate Professors, six Professors, and three PhD specialists, including a high-ranking policy advisor. In terms of institutional affiliation, three are from Democritus University, seven are from other institutions, and two are external specialists. The incoming student count is set at 31 for fall 2025.

The faculty have a range of specializations and expertise, as reflected in courses they teach, such as: Law and International Security; Crisis Management and Decision-Making; Geopolitics and International Security; National Security Strategy; U.S. National Security and Strategy; and Security, Intelligence, and Terrorism.

Faculty teaching in the new PSP will be expected to use a variety of teaching methods as appropriate, serve students as mentors and advisors, and provide student counseling—both formal and informal—to monitor student progress. They should also follow best practices when addressing student complaints in a respectful, collaborative, and inclusive environment. Additionally, faculty will be encouraged to engage in collaboration with national and international institutions on research projects and programs that promote 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 limited. The Department explicitly states that it will ensure the knowledge and skills of the teaching staff and that it will implement fair and transparent procedures for recruitment, training, and ongoing professional growth. Evidence supporting this commitment will be available once the program is operational.

The faculty of the National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management program designated to teach this PSP possesses strong and diverse credentials in teaching, research, publications, and active professional memberships. Files provided by the department show significant faculty scholarship in research and publishing, as well as active collaborations with both national and international higher education institutions. The faculty's research output is well documented, with data shown to the Accreditation Panel indicating a high number of citations in Google Scholar and Scopus (some in the 800s), and an h-index of up to 14 for several faculty members. The quality of research compares very favorably to that of other leading institutions of higher education.

It is important to note that involving senior-level specialists with external affiliations is highly advantageous. This group of faculty members includes senior academics from other universities who have established reputations and expertise in the subject matter of the new PSP. As external specialists, they bring substantial experience in policy development within national security and diplomacy. Beyond their subject-matter knowledge, external experts with long-standing ties to the policy development community will further improve professional networking opportunities, benefiting course development, related research, and the future graduates of the program. Their presence should also help facilitate student internships and job placement opportunities for upcoming graduates of the new PSP.

The ambitious goals of the new PSP on National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management will be well supported by increased interactions among the teaching staff, many of whom live outside the area. Funding support for travel to promote such interactions would be a significant benefit. The Panel was informed, and is fully aware, that under current circumstances, resources are severely constrained. The Department of Political Science's decision to charge fees for the new PSP has positive implications for the resources available to support faculty travel to policy-oriented institutes and centers that focus on national security policies.

III. Conclusions

The new PSP on National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management has the potential to excel thanks to a highly qualified faculty of experts who possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and specialized expertise. The criteria for faculty recruitment and performance evaluation are clearly outlined and thoroughly documented. Many faculty members, who are scheduled to teach in the program starting in fall 2025, have established reputations for active scholarship and research in both the theoretical aspects of the subject and in policy development. Several faculty members have well-established national and international collaborations across all areas of the subject. The Department of Political Science's decision to charge tuition for this new PSP can be very beneficial by providing resources for faculty professional development, conference travel, specialized seminars, and valuable relationships with national and international policy institutions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The ambitious goals of the new PSP on National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management, will be well served by enhanced interactions among the teaching staff, many of whom reside out-of-area. Increased funding support for travel to encourage such interactions would be a big plus.

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

Since the program is conducted exclusively through distance learning, the on-site infrastructural conditions do not play a significant role from the students' perspective. As for the conditions of distance learning, the Democritus University of Thrace possesses a comprehensive distance learning system. Specifically, Democritus University of Thrace employs platforms that address the requirements of both synchronous and asynchronous distance education. Synchronous education is delivered via Microsoft Teams, while asynchronous education is supported through the Open e-Class platform, which offers a wide range of features and functionalities.

After multiple organizational restructurings, the Department was reestablished in its current form in 2019. The Department of Political Science aspires to educate

political scientists capable of meeting the complex demands of understanding and addressing political phenomena and contemporary politics at national, supranational, and international levels.

A core subject of the Department is the phenomenon of power in all its dimensions: historically, geographically, and through the analysis of discourse on power.

The Department houses the Laboratory of Geopolitical Analysis.

II. Analysis

Democritus University of Thrace offers and manages postgraduate programs via distance learning methods, fully adhering to the provisions set by the relevant legal framework.

Postgraduate programs are conducted solely through distance learning methods, as long as the academic content is properly and sufficiently supported by this specific form of instruction.

The Postgraduate program of National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management is designed to meet current scientific standards and established teaching principles.

The Postgraduate program of National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management aims to give students a comprehensive understanding of National Security, Intelligence, and Crisis Management through interdisciplinary methods and practical training.

The program implements the following quality assurance procedures:

- selects qualified and appropriate teaching staff.
- evaluates the teaching performance through student feedback on a semester basis.
- utilizes a variety of teaching methods and techniques, with an emphasis on student-centered approaches and practices.
- monitors and supports students' academic progress and development throughout their studies.
- encourages each student to engage in scientific writing and to publish articles in reputable medical journals.
- applies the institution of the Academic Advisor system.
- ensures the integration of teaching and research activities

III. Conclusions

From the perspective of the University and the Program, distance postgraduate education is not solely based on technologies meant to replace face-to-face teaching. Instead, it is mainly defined by a pedagogical philosophy that emphasizes interactive processes that encourage learners' active participation in meaningful learning activities.

E-learning is based on the interaction between students and educational resources, providing learners with better opportunities to review complex or challenging content and reflect.

Instructors use both synchronous and asynchronous technologies in various ways to foster and encourage students' active participation in the learning process, rather than passive observation.

The instructor uses both synchronous and asynchronous technologies to encourage and promote active student participation in learning, instead of passive observation.

Regarding student services, the Department manages the Academic Advisory institution. First-year students receive an informational booklet with detailed guidance. The Department follows up with career surveys and helps with the philological review of theses. It has a dedicated phone line for urgent issues, a Student Ombudsman, and a separate office for handling internships and Erasmus procedures.

The National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management program aims to give students both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience in areas such as risk prevention and analysis, while also strengthening institutional resilience.

Graduates of the program will be able to combine scientific knowledge with practical aspects of national security. Students will have the chance to apply their knowledge to real-world situations through hands-on exercises.

Program graduates will be able to effectively handle critical situations.

During the meeting with social partners for the program, we discovered that the program has strong government backing, which also aligns with the state's regional interests. All of this indicates that graduates can expect stable job prospects and opportunities for career growth.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The panel did not receive a clear picture of how the program connects with various local government institutions and local community initiatives. Given that the program is conducted entirely through distance education, particular attention must be paid to maintaining engagement with the local community.

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.
- The program fills a gap in postgraduate education in Greece, aligning academic offerings with state and societal needs in a rapidly evolving geopolitical context.

II. Areas of Weakness

Due to the distance learning nature of the program, greater attention must be paid to maintaining contact with the local community.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

While the current thesis handbook serves its basic function, its improvement through structural enrichment is strongly recommended to further support student success and academic coherence.

Consider adjusting the program in a way that it contributes more directly to the region's development in a physical way.

The ambitious goals of the new PSP on National Security, Intelligence and Crisis Management, will be well served by enhanced interactions among the teaching staff, many of whom reside out-of-area. Increased funding support for travel to encourage such interactions would be a big plus.

The panel did not receive a clear picture of how the program connects with various local government institutions and local community initiatives. Given that the program is conducted entirely through distance education, particular attention must be paid to maintaining engagement with the local community.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

One (1), Three (3), Four (4), Five (5), Six (6).

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Two (2).

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

None

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

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