



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή  
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**  
Hellenic Authority  
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece  
T. +30 211 1903 400 • E. [secretariat@ethaee.gr](mailto:secretariat@ethaee.gr) • [www.ethaee.gr](http://www.ethaee.gr)

# **Accreditation Report**

## **for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:**

**Management of Prevention and Management of Crisis and Disaster:  
Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection**

**Institution: Democritus University of Thrace**  
**Department: Civil Engineering**  
**Date: November 2025**



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση  
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα  
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και  
Κοινωνική Συνοχή



Report of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Postgraduate Study Programme of **Management of Prevention and Management of Crisis and Disaster: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                           |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW.....</b>                                                                  | <b>4</b>  |
| I.    The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel .....                                                                 | 4         |
| II.   Review Procedure and Documentation.....                                                                             | 5         |
| III.  Postgraduate Study Programme Profile .....                                                                          | 7         |
| <b>PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES .....</b>                                                                       | <b>9</b>  |
| Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes.....   | 9         |
| Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes.....                                                | 14        |
| Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification ..... | 18        |
| Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes .....                                                    | 22        |
| Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support.....                                                                  | 26        |
| Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes.....            | 28        |
| <b>PART C: CONCLUSIONS.....</b>                                                                                           | <b>31</b> |
| I.    Features of Good Practice .....                                                                                     | 31        |
| II.   Areas of Weakness .....                                                                                             | 31        |
| III.  Recommendations for Follow-up Actions .....                                                                         | 32        |
| IV.  Summary & Overall Assessment.....                                                                                    | 33        |

## **PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW**

### **I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel**

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new postgraduate study programme of **Management of Prevention and Management of Crisis and Disaster: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Law 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. KATOPODES NIKOLAOS** (Chair)  
University of Michigan, United States of America
- 2. Prof. HARITOS GEORGE**  
College of Engineering, The University of Akron, United States of America
- 3. Prof. PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS**  
Universidade do Algarve, Portugal
- 4. Prof. PHOCAS MARIOS C.**  
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- 5. Mr. Tsivolas Konstantinos**  
National Technical University of Athens, Greece

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the new Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection at Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) reviewed a multitude of materials provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE). These included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, as well as detailed data related to the PSP under evaluation, such as the Programme's accreditation criteria proposal and its associated appendices.

The programme review was conducted via teleconference, which was organized and coordinated by HAHE and Democritus University of Thrace. The schedule and agenda of the review were as follows:

Monday, 10/11/2025:

Preliminary private teleconference meeting of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel. Discussion of the Programme under review. Assignment of writing parts of the accreditation report to the members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.

Tuesday, 11/11/2025:

1. Welcome teleconference meeting and an overview of the PSP with Prof. Fotios Maris, Rector and Director of the PSP, Prof. Marirena Grigoriou, Vice-Rector and MODIP President, Prof. Christos Akratos, Head of the Department of Civil Engineering, and Ms. Styliani Gkavaki, Associate Director of MODIP.

2. Meeting with the teaching staff members of the PSP, including:

- a. Prof. Dimitrios Emmanouloudis,
- b. Prof. Nikolaos Klimis,
- c. Prof. Ioannis Dokas
- d. Prof. Anastasia Paschalidou, Assoc. Prof. Pantelis Xofis
- e. Asst. Prof. Pavlos Asteriou
- f. Asst. Prof. Emmanouil Rovithis
- g. Asst. Prof. Maria Vlachadi
- h. Dr. Theodoros Kolidas.

3. Online tour: classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities related to the PSP. Discussion about the facilities presented in the video produced for this purpose. Continuation of the conversation with the members of the teaching faculty present in the previous session.

4. Meeting with employers and social partners
  - a. Mr. Ioannis Tsapalis, Deputy Mayor of Civil Protection, Municipality of Xanthi
  - b. Mr. Dimitrios Mavrogiorgos, Director of Civil Protection, Epirus Regional Authority  
Dr. Dimitrios Alexandris, Director of Emergency Planning, Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection
  - c. Prof. Constantinos Papazachos, Member of Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization.
5. Debriefing meeting (External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel members only).
6. Closure meeting with Prof. Fotios Maris, Rector and Director of the PSP, Prof. Marirena Grigoriou, Vice-Rector and MODIP President, Prof. Christos Akratos, Head of the Department of Civil Engineering, and Ms. Styliani Gkavaki, Associate Director of MODIP.
7. Wednesday, 12/11/2025 to Saturday 15/11/2025:  
Draft report writing. Review and finalization of the draft report.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel maintained close communication with the Department and the PSP administration, which were very accommodating in providing the additional information requested by the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel found that the Department, the PSP administration, as well as the faculty, staff, and stakeholders interviewed, were all eager and helpful during our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

### **III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile**

The new postgraduate study programme (PSP) Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection at Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) is organized and offered by the Department of Civil Engineering in collaboration with the Department of Natural Environment and Climate Resilience at Democritus University of Thrace.

The creation of postgraduate programmes is part of the long-term development plan of DUTH, which follows the strategic plan (25/97/16-11-2023) for each department and school. Besides a holistic redefinition of the goals and objectives of the new PSP, the plan offers the option of distance learning for up to 50% of the instruction, as per Article τΒ' 4751/20-08-2024-Addendum 5 of the Official Government Gazette. This was approved in the Senate meeting No. 38/129/15-04-2025 according to the regulations of article 80, 4957/2022 (Α' 141) of the Official Government Gazette. The new PSP will operate for the first time in the academic year 2026-2027 under the regulations of DUTH for postgraduate and doctoral studies established by the University Senate.

The objective of the PSP is to train and specialize scientists, engineers, and managers in civil protection organizations and select private organizations, with the ultimate goal of training graduates to prevent and manage disasters and crises. Furthermore, the PSP aims to provide the practical experience necessary for civil servants to coordinate experts from different disciplines during disasters. Finally, the PSP aspires to equip graduates with advanced tools that will aid them in the pursuit of civil protection during Crises and Disasters, thereby strengthening the impact of the Departments of Civil Engineering and Natural Environment and Climate Resilience in the field of disaster management.

In the long term, eighteen (18) members of the faculty of DUTH, three (3) faculty members from other universities, and eight (8) external collaborators will provide teaching in the PSP. The programme has set the maximum number of admitted students per academic year to forty (40) students. The minimum number of admitted students per academic year is twenty (20) students. The goal of the PSP is to maintain a low student-to-instructor ratio. The PSP requires a minimum of three (3) academic semesters for the completion of the study by full-time students. The PSP does not require any prerequisites, nor does it offer any remedial courses. To graduate, a student must have completed 90 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (60 ECTS for coursework, 10 for the student internship, and 20 ECTS for the preparation and successful completion of a postgraduate thesis). There is a limited number of elective courses offered after the first semester, providing some flexibility in the study programme. Attendance is required. Examinations are administered in person unless otherwise decided by the PSP. There is an extensive description of the measures taken to maintain the integrity of examinations by students in the distance-learning version of the programme. Student mobility will not be possible due to the relatively brief duration of the study programme.

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel did not interview any current students or recent graduates, as this is a truly new Programme. During the interviews with potential employers and stakeholders of the PSP, it became evident that they all have a high respect for the quality of graduates from Democritus University of Thrace, and they expect the new PSP to follow the same standards as the rest of the University. The participants expressed a strong interest in participating in the decision-making for the curriculum and focus of the new PSP.

The PSP prepares graduates trained in the management of crises and Disasters, leading to careers primarily in the public sector. Additionally, a small fraction of graduates may pursue doctoral studies. There are strong links to the needs of society, which is a key priority of the PSP in the Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters, utilizing innovative techniques in Civil Protection. Presently, the Department of Civil Engineering offers three (3) additional postgraduate programmes with highly focused specializations. The Department also maintains a very active programme in doctoral and postdoctoral studies. The Department of Natural Environment and Climate Resilience offers one additional postgraduate programme, which has some common topics with the new PSP.

The new PSP will compete with similar postgraduate programmes, three (3) of which are offered by the National Kapodistrian University of Athens, one (1) by Harokopio University of Athens, and one (1) by the University of the Aegean. Currently, there is no other similar programme offered in Northern or Central Greece; thus, the new PSP is expected to address a significant need in providing training to civil servants in these areas.

## 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**

According to Decision 25/97/16-11-2023 of the Senate of Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), the central Strategic Goal of the University in terms of developing postgraduate programmes is excellence in education and its connection with research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

The postgraduate programmes organized by the University aim to promote original scientific research and contribute to the development of knowledge in at least one scientific discipline. Moreover, they encourage and promote the horizontal skills of students via interdisciplinarity achieved through cooperation between DUTH Departments. At the same time, they aim to strengthen extroversion through the establishment of joint programmes with recognized bodies and institutions at home and abroad.

The postgraduate programmes offered by DUTH have established several key objectives. Their aims, among others, are to equip graduates with the knowledge, abilities, and skills necessary for successful careers, to educate young scientists in a wide range of scientific fields, and to support research, both basic and applied. Additionally, by educating young executives and professionals in disciplines essential for supporting local and national businesses and organizations, they aim to benefit the economy and society as a whole.

To achieve these goals, Democritus University of Thrace is developing specific actions, having studied its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats it faces from its external environment (SWOT analysis). The SWOT analysis highlights the alignment of the new PSP with the DUTH strategy to strengthen the link between education, research, market needs, and funding sources.

The University's e-learning strategy follows the Regulation of Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies of Democritus University of Thrace (Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic, issue 4751/20-08-2024-Appendix 5), wherein a pedagogical framework is provided for the planning and implementation of activities using distance learning methods and student evaluation, as well as analytical distance learning methods.

In particular, the PSP entitled "Management of Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection" will be conducted up to 50% through distance learning methods, in accordance with the provisions of the aforementioned regulation for the implementation of the institution's e-learning system.

The DUTH Departments of Civil Engineering and of Forestry & Natural Environment (based on Law 5094/2024, Natural Environment and Climate Resilience, from the Academic Year 2025-2026), which will collaborate in offering this PSP, have the appropriate infrastructure to support distance learning, as they have certified videoconferencing rooms and licenses to use appropriate videoconferencing software. In addition, the offices of all faculty are equipped with the appropriate materials for conducting distance learning (e.g., computers, cameras, microphones, speakers, etc.).

The Department of Civil Engineering, in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (MO.DI.P.) of Democritus University of Thrace, has harmonized the Quality Policy of all Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes it offers with the University's Quality Policy. Specifically, the new PSP is part of the strategic planning of DUTH, and is committed to the implementation of a quality policy that supports the academic profile and orientation of the curriculum, promotes its purpose and objectives, implements its strategic goals, determines the means and methods of achieving them, and aims at its continuous improvement.

The Department of Civil Engineering publishes a Quality Policy for PSPs, committing to an annual internal evaluation and review of the PSP QA system (in collaboration with OMEA/IEG and MODIP/QAU), focusing on Level-7 learning outcomes, staff suitability, teaching effectiveness, student support, and the prudent use of tuition-fee resources. A dedicated Quality Targeting document defines strategic goals, measurable indicators, baselines/targets, actions, responsibilities, and timelines (e.g., year-end targets for completion/achievement rates, as well as curriculum updates).

The PSP has posted its quality policy on its website (<https://pms.civil.DUTH.gr/>), so its new and current students can be adequately informed. Moreover, newly admitted students are notified about the Programme's quality policy during the student reception ceremonies.

The quality policy of the PSP is also communicated through its interactions with the local community and chambers, during the organization of actions with professional bodies, and during the presentation of its research results.

## **II. Analysis**

After careful consideration of all materials provided by the University, the Civil Engineering Department Chair, the University President and PSP Director, the faculty, and the stakeholders, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel concluded that the structure and organization of the new PSP are well planned and in line with the overall goals of the University and of the two supporting Departments. The material covered, along with the study of relevant new technologies, laws, and practices in the subject areas, results in learning outcomes and qualifications for postgraduate students that are consistent with Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The teaching methods, learning outcomes, and the evaluation of student satisfaction are explained in the PSP Study Guide.

The Quality Assurance Policy is sufficiently communicated to all parties involved. The Department of Civil Engineering has established specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals for this postgraduate programme. Specifically, the goals that will be monitored include: the annual improvement based on the student surveys; the number of invited speakers; the student to instructor ratio; the grade point average of students; the research output by the faculty evaluated by such factors as the number of journal publications, citations, and impact; the participation of students in research; the number of publications with postgraduate students as co-authors; the number of conferences in which postgraduate students participate; the students satisfaction of the administrative support; the adequacy and quality of the infrastructure; the role and support of the academic advisor; the website information; the number of public events organized by the PSP; the number of field training visits; and the number of postgraduate students who develop a practice-based Thesis in collaboration with an external organization.

Based on the data provided to the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel, the targets are also paired with suitable key performance indicators (KPIs). Goals will be monitored, updated, and communicated in accordance with the Quality Assurance Policy implemented by the Institution and the PSP. The quality assurance system will be reviewed annually by the IEG, and the results will be communicated to the University QAU, which will issue an annual report.

## **III. Conclusions**

Overall, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel believes that this is a well-organized PSP that focuses on both the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of learning. The Department of Civil Engineering has established a Quality Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP. It includes a commitment to its implementation and continuous improvement of the Programme. The metrics established by the PSP and the Institution are adequate in tracking and documenting the quality of the Programme. An external advisory board for the continuous improvement of the PSP has been mentioned, but it has not yet been established.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

R1.1 Strengthen ties with potential employers of PSP graduates—both from industry and from local and National public organizations—by establishing an external, independent Advisory Board for this PSP. This Board should meet at least once per semester to receive information on the Programme's status and progress from the PSP Director and the Department. The Board members should also be invited to offer oral and written recommendations for potential improvements to the PSP.

R1.2 In view of the very broad focus of this PSP, consider organizing small teams of students to work together (under the supervision and with the support of one or more faculty advisors) to prepare an applied thesis that covers and addresses more than one of the several focus areas of this PSP. Involvement of one or more stakeholders in this undertaking should be strongly encouraged.

## Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

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

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

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

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

*In addition, the design of PSP must consider:*

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

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

### Documentation

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP*
- *PSP curriculum structure: courses, course categories, ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the NQF, internship, mobility opportunities*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a relevant scientific field*
- *PSP Student Guide*
- *Course and thesis outlines*
- *Teaching staff: teaching assignments per subject area and per course*

## Study Programme Compliance

### I. Findings

The establishment of the new Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) “Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection” was approved by Democritus University of Thrace Senate (decision no. 38/129/15-4-2025). The decision was based on the provisions of Public Law 4957/2022, as well as other pertinent laws and regulations, and the proposal by the Assembly of the Department of Civil Engineering and the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment.

The programme is well-designed and covers a broad selection of topics in the fields of Environmental Disasters, Decision Analysis, and Crisis Management for a wide variety of causes. These include floods, fires, earthquakes, windstorms, cybersecurity, and homeland security, addressing not only the technical aspects but also the economic, social, and political implications of these phenomena. A variety of courses addresses the professional interests of all students, regardless of their background. The goal of the new PSP is to train new scientists with specialized knowledge and skills for practice in the design, management, and implementation of strategies for preventing and responding to crises and disasters. In particular, the programme emphasizes the connection between theory and practice, fostering collaboration among diverse scientific fields, with the ultimate goal of producing specialized executives who can effectively address the challenges of the modern era in civil protection. Upon completing their studies, graduates will be able to identify and assess critical risks and threats, apply interdisciplinary approaches to crisis management, utilize innovative techniques and tools in civil protection, develop leadership and collaboration skills, communicate effectively in critical conditions, and promote the sustainability and resilience of society.

The PSP consists of three (3) academic semesters of study, resulting in a PSP diploma, level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. To graduate, the student must have completed 90 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, comprising 60 ECTS credits for coursework, 10 ECTS credits for practical training, and 20 ECTS credits for preparing and completing the mandatory postgraduate thesis. A limited number of elective courses are included in the PSP curriculum. Lectures are given both in person and via distance learning, with attendance being mandatory.

The students will participate in the continuous development and delivery of the curriculum by submitting, every semester, their assessment of each course’s content and the instructor’s effectiveness in delivering the course topics via course/instructor questionnaires prepared by the University QAU/MODIP. The Student Guide is comprehensive and easily accessible to all students.

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel discussion with stakeholders from industry and government agencies underscored the high level of interest in this PSP among the Greek public. During the same meeting, all participating stakeholders expressed their interest in maintaining close contact with and contributing to further development of the PSP. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel discussed the possibility of formal development of an External Advisory Board and suggested including in its membership the

stakeholders of senior government officials and other experts from academia and technology to advise the PSP administrators regarding the strategic development of this Programme, potential curriculum enhancements, research, technological and socioeconomic needs, and the like.

## II. Analysis

Course descriptions with expected learning outcomes, based on the European and National Qualifications Framework and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7, are adequate. There is minimal overlap with the content of similar undergraduate courses, allowing students to upgrade their knowledge and specialize in civil protection. The quality of the Programme at the postgraduate level is deemed high.

Civil protection specialization is in high demand in Greece. This is also due to the recent natural disasters (fires, floods, etc.) that took place in Greece. These disasters contributed to people's awareness of the significance of knowledge regarding crisis management. Providing students with work experience is available in the proposed PSP and constitutes one of the key strengths of this new PSP compared to the existing one. However, the Thesis component of the ECTS of the Programme is significantly smaller than the level recommended in Master's-level studies.

Although a Feasibility and Sustainability Study for the new PSP was conducted, the minimum number of admitted PSP students for the Programme to be viable is not given adequate significance in the documentation received by the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel. Mitigation measures in the event of a low number of admitted students are not mentioned. Additionally, the feasibility study does not adequately consider the capacities of the two forestry-related departments at the University, and instead focuses mostly on the civil engineering department.

## III. Conclusions

The PSP is well-designed, covering a broad range of topics in civil protection and offering valuable work experience for students. However, the feasibility study has some flaws, and the PSP has not yet established an External Advisory Board.

### Panel Judgement

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

**Panel Recommendations**

- R2.1 Establish an Advisory Board made of senior government/industry officials to advise the programme administrators regarding the strategic development and enhancement of this Programme.
- R2.2 Combine the experience gained in the mandatory student internship with the development of the Thesis.

### **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 External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel has confirmed that predefined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place. The admission criteria are clear, consistent, and transparent. Admission to the PSP is limited to 40 students per year. Eligible candidates include graduates from a wide range of disciplines. The Programme accepts graduates from disciplines like Forestry and Natural Environment, Climate Resilience and Natural Environment, Geology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology, etc., Schools of Engineering (Civil Engineers, Environmental Engineers, Mechanical Engineers, Electrical Engineers, etc.), as well as departments dealing with Natural Resources Management, Environmental Policy, and Environmental Protection. In addition, graduates of departments in Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration, and International Relations are accepted, as well as Graduates of Military and Police Schools, Fire Academies, and other Civil Protection bodies, or those from departments related to these subjects at domestic universities or recognized equivalent institutions abroad.

The PSP has clear regulations regarding student progression. The minimum duration of the PSP for full-time students is three semesters, with each semester comprising 30 ECTS credits, totaling 90 ECTS credits. All academic and other relevant data are readily available to students on the PSP's website and the Learning Management System (e-class). The Programme has established services to ensure effective delivery of courses both in-person and online, and mechanisms to monitor student satisfaction through course evaluations. Student progress is continuously monitored to ensure that students have registered for and completed the expected courses each semester, and that they have been assigned a post-graduate internship and a supervisor in their 3rd semester of study. The necessary administrative support and technological infrastructure are in place for delivering the Programme.

Appropriate recognition procedures are in place and align with standards. There are well-defined criteria for completing the postgraduate final work. Certification procedures are established, and students are properly informed about them. A Diploma Supplement is provided to all graduates of the Programme in both Greek and English.

### **II. Analysis**

The PSP utilizes effective processes and tools to manage, coordinate, and address student admission, progression, recognition, and certification properly. The internal assessment mechanisms are well-developed, enabling continuous monitoring of key student performance indicators. Programme requirements and other relevant information are readily available to both prospective and current students on the PSP's webpage.

The PSP adheres to the same admission criteria as other state universities in Greece, in accordance with National law. The Programme has established processes and mechanisms to support incoming students and has created a welcoming and engaging environment. A student support and services system is in place to assist students with academic and personal challenges.

The Diploma Supplement contains several mistakes and omissions that require correction. Specifically, it does not include the name of both organizing departments; it does not state correctly the new name of one of the supporting departments; It indicates 2nd cycle of studies as the qualification level instead of Level 7; It does not mention that the mode of study is blended (50% in person and 50% distance learning); It does not mention that the access requirement is to have a 6th level graduation; It does not mention that it provides access to further studies at doctoral level 8; It does not include up-to-date information on the National higher education system by making references to TEI.

Finally, the main field(s) of study for the qualification are mentioned in the Diploma as “Natural and technological disasters management”. This does not fully encompass the diverse aims of the study programme, and it is not listed in the qualifications of CEDEFOR (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) or in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel suggests considering the field of qualification: “Civil Protection” (as defined in the ISCED with code 861: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International\\_Standard\\_Classification\\_of\\_Education\\_\(ISCED\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED))).

The fields of study for the qualification in civil protection are a multidisciplinary combination of civil engineering, land management, environmental science, and crisis management.

### III. Conclusions

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel concluded that the programme adequately addresses all individual aspects required to ensure student admission, progression, and completion of studies. However, the Diploma Supplement has several mistakes and omissions that should be corrected.

### Panel Judgement

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

### **Panel Recommendations**

- R3.1 Enhance student mobility to include internships in international schools using ERASMUS student exchanges, and support student participation in research projects, international workshops, and training programmes as part of their final work credits.
- R3.2 The Diploma Supplement should indicate Level 7 as the qualification level, and Level 6 as the admission level. The Supplement should also mention that the mode of instruction is blended (50% in person and 50% distant learning), should include up-to-date information on the national higher education system, and should consider the fields of study of the qualification “Civil Protection: civil engineering, land management, environmental science, and crisis management”.

## 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 faculties of the Department of Civil Engineering and the Department of Natural Environment and Climate Resilience at Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), which participate in the Postgraduate Programme (PSP), possess a high level of expertise in the fields of crisis and disaster prevention and management. This is reflected in their teaching activities and published research work in reputable scientific journals. Eighteen (18) faculty and teaching staff members from DUTH, and 11 faculty members and instructors from other higher education institutions and professional/academic bodies, conduct teaching in the PSP. Teaching duties of the PSP may be assigned to members of the teaching and research staff, special educational staff, laboratory teaching staff, emeritus professors, retired staff members, and affiliated professors. Contracted teaching fellows, visiting professors, researchers, and special scientific personnel, scientists of recognized standing, who possess specialized knowledge and relevant practice experience in the subject area of the Programme, as well as doctoral candidates of the Department or the School, are also eligible to teach in the PSP.

Supervision of postgraduate theses may be undertaken by instructors falling under the above-mentioned categories, except the last two, provided that they hold a doctoral degree. The average weekly teaching workload of academic staff

in the PSP is 9.54 hours, with a minimum of 3.5 hours and a maximum of 16 hours, excluding the workload associated with supervising postgraduate theses. The PSP instruction will be delivered to a maximum of 50% through distance learning methods.

All categories of instructors may be remunerated from the PSP's resources. In particular, the teaching staff may receive additional compensation for work performed for the Programme, provided that they have fulfilled their minimum statutory teaching obligations. The supervision of postgraduate theses may also be compensated, provided that the supervisory workload exceeds the minimum obligations prescribed by law. Exclusive employment of teaching staff solely within the PSP of the Department or School is not permitted.

Strong synergies are evident between research, teaching, and professional practice, supported by the faculty's and external teaching staff's extensive academic qualifications and experience in the thematic areas addressed by the PSP.

The University has adopted a strategy for academic staff development, which includes the Award for Excellence in Teaching. This award (not exceeding €2,000) may cover expenses for participation in a scientific conference, a subscription to a journal or database, or the cost of books. Nominated candidates must meet at least one of the following criteria: integration of research and teaching; teaching activities with impact beyond DUTH; outstanding mentoring and student support; promotion of effective and innovative learning; consistently high-quality and original teaching; and the effective use of appropriate learning and teaching tools and resources.

Faculty receive guidance and support from the DUTH. The Teaching and Learning Support Center is involved in the development and delivery of its courses. For the professional development of the faculty and in alignment with the institutional mobility strategy, the Department participates in the University's academic staff mobility programmes. Since 1996, DUTH has actively participated in the Erasmus Mobility Program, and since 2015, in the International Credit Mobility (ICM) action, fostering cooperation with partner institutions in non-EU countries. Finally, the Department adheres to the University's policy, which encourages faculty members to participate in academic conferences to enhance the quality and international visibility of their research activities. Although the statute on educational leave (sabbatical) exists at the university level, the relatively heavy teaching load of the faculty members hinders its effective implementation.

Evaluation of the teaching staff by postgraduate students is conducted regularly at the end of each semester, anonymously and electronically through the online platform of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) at the University. Students complete a standardized course evaluation questionnaire. The assessment of teaching competence constitutes a fundamental criterion for the election and promotion of academic staff members.

## II. Analysis

The faculty members involved in the PSP, along with the external teaching staff, possess the necessary expertise and capacity to deliver a high-quality academic programme that effectively balances theory and professional practice. They demonstrate strong educational and research credentials, complemented by extensive and valuable professional experience in sectors closely aligned with their areas of specialization.

In particular, the inclusion of faculty members from other higher education institutions and from the professional sector constitutes a notable strength of the Programme. This structure requires substantial involvement of external teaching staff in course delivery, ensuring that students acquire the professional knowledge and skills necessary in the fields of Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters, as well as innovative techniques in Civil Protection, through both teaching methods employed, namely in-person and online instruction. Moreover, the coordination of a relatively large teaching team, comprising a considerable number of external contributors, plays a crucial role in ensuring the seamless organization of the PSP. The programme's administration should therefore ensure that all instructors are actively engaged in the full range of programme activities, thereby achieving the pedagogical balance between theory and practice. Regular team meetings should also be held to foster collaboration and to ensure the coherent and consistent delivery of the curriculum.

The Department should closely monitor the teaching workload of faculty members and provide appropriate technical and administrative support, enabling them to sustain and further enhance their research activities and productivity.

At present, there is no formal mentoring process in place for early-career faculty members.

## III. Conclusions

The teaching staff are highly qualified to deliver the new PSP curriculum, in collaboration with external instructors in the respective applied subject areas. They combine extensive academic and professional experience with active collaborations and networks involving national and international partners from both the public and private sectors.

### Panel Judgement

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

### **Panel Recommendations**

R4.1 Develop and implement a systematic plan to monitor the teaching and overall workload of faculty members involved in the delivery of the Programme, and introduce appropriate measures to mitigate any excessive burden identified.

R4.2 Enhance the level of technical and administrative support available to academic staff, to strengthen their capacity for research and increase overall research productivity.

R4.3 Establish and maintain a structured coordination framework for the large teaching team, comprising both faculty members and external teaching staff, to ensure regular meetings and open channels of communication that promote appropriate involvement, coherence, and consistency in the delivery of the Programme.

R4.4 Design and implement a formal mentoring scheme to support the professional development of early-career faculty members.

## Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

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

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

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

### Documentation

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

### Study Programme Compliance

#### I. Findings

The PSP will be conducted partly through in-person instruction and partly via e-learning. The Departments of Civil Engineering and Natural Environment and Climate Resilience possess adequate facilities, including classrooms and laboratories, to support fully in-person teaching. Additionally, the Municipality of Soufli's infrastructure will also help the needs of the PSP. For distance learning, the PSP, under the auspices of DUTH, provides a comprehensive e-learning system that ensures effective organization (Open e-Class) and delivery (MS Teams) of online courses. The library of DUTH is available to PSP students and can be accessed online. The library has access to numerous research journals through the HealLink network, and its administrative staff can provide guidance on their use. Administrative procedures such as course registration and grade access are managed online through the University's Student Information System.

Students can benefit from several support services, including the Advisory and Accessibility Structure, the Student Ombudsman, and the Careers and Academic Liaison Office. Each student is assigned a Study Adviser from the teaching staff, who plays a wide-ranging supportive role. The PSP also provides the Philologus platform, which enables language editing and text proofreading, and proves to be very useful during thesis preparation. Most of the support services are mentioned in the academic guide. The Quality Assurance Unit of DUTH already evaluates postgraduate student support services.

## II. Analysis

The PSP employs a blended learning model that integrates in-person and online instruction. Students have access to all necessary digital platforms, tools, and facilities that enable them to engage fully with the Programme. As most students will likely reside far from the university, the availability of the online library and the UniverSIS platform will prove particularly valuable, as they facilitate access to academic resources and administrative services.

The range of student support services makes a significant positive contribution to the overall student experience, reflecting a student-centered approach. The evaluation of these services by the Quality Assurance Unit ensures that standards are maintained and improved over time.

## III. Conclusions

The PSP meets the expectations of Principle 5. Students are provided with appropriate learning resources, support services, and guidance to facilitate their academic success.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

R5.1 Enhance the visibility and accessibility of student support services by communicating them more regularly. Periodic online briefing sessions and/or a dedicated presentation file sent to each student's email at the beginning of every semester could be sufficient to achieve this.

R5.2 The Academic Guide of the PSP should be updated to include all student support services that are currently missing and mentioned in the Academic Certification Proposal, such as the Student Ombudsman and the Philologus platform.

## 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

The quality objectives of the academic unit for the PSP align with the principles outlined in the current standards and the quality assurance procedures of the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel observed that the feasibility and sustainability studies conducted for the establishment and operation of the New PSP are grounded in procedures that align with the Institution's strategic objectives.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be systematically monitored through the annual internal evaluation process. The assessment of the PSP will consider

factors such as the enhancement and advancement of the educational mission, the support of research in relevant scientific fields, internationalization, and outward engagement.

Furthermore, the PSP's self-assessment process must take into account scientific and technological developments within the field, as well as evolving market needs. The PSP Director, in collaboration with the Coordination Committee, will collect feedback from students, academic staff, and other relevant stakeholders to inform the annual self-assessment. The resulting yearly report will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) for review. A clear timeline for the self-assessment process has been established, and recommendations for improvement will be communicated to the General Faculty Assembly. Decisions regarding enhancements will be finalized at the conclusion of the academic year and implemented at the start of the following academic year.

## II. Analysis

Through the process of internal review and continuous improvement, the PSP aims to enhance its existing strengths by maintaining a suitable balance between theory and professional practice, and by incorporating new topics that reflect current scientific advancements. The PSP Director will analyze data collected during the evaluation to ensure the Programme remains current and responsive. Students will participate in the evaluation process each semester, and upon completion of the Programme, allowing identified weaknesses to be addressed promptly.

Although the PSP has not undergone a prior external evaluation, the Institution, through its QAU, organizes and supports external evaluation procedures for the new Programme in accordance with the specific guidelines provided by HAHE.

## III. Conclusions

While the PSP was designed and implemented in compliance with the Institution's internal regulations, a formal involvement of external stakeholders in the internal evaluation process has not yet been incorporated.

### 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**

R6.1 Establish an external Advisory Board to support the ongoing development of the Programme and to foster sustained connections with the research community and relevant professional bodies.

R6.2 The PSP is encouraged to establish an external Advisory Board to guide revisions of the study programme, and the PSP should actively involve external stakeholders in the annual review process.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) has implemented compliant and efficient mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring a high-quality education and services relative to the PSP Prevention and Management of Crises and Disasters: Innovative Techniques in Civil Protection. The existing quality assurance and continuous improvement policy and practices followed by the PSP align with the strategic objectives of the Departments of Civil Engineering and Natural Environment and Climate Resilience, as well as those of Democritus University of Thrace. Specifically, the new PSP has established numerous features of good practice, including:

- A unique offering of substantive, wide coverage of courses for managing Crises and Disasters, and offering opportunities for practical training to the students by requiring practical training during the third semester of study.
- Significant expertise in many of the areas covered in the study programme by the faculty of DUTH and an assembly of external experts to complement the remaining subject areas.
- A strong research record and academic profile of the faculty.
- A high potential for employment of the postgraduate study programme graduates in civil service and private sector positions.
- A unanimous praise of the PSP by potential employers and social partners.

### **II. Areas of Weakness**

- There is neither a formal External Advisory Board nor a streamlined input to the curriculum design by stakeholders and students.
- The subject areas covered by the study programme are too numerous and diverse to permit an in-depth study of the topics.
- There are only two elective courses, which limits the flexibility of the study programme.
- The course syllabi do not reflect a postgraduate level. There are no prerequisites for the classes, and no remedial courses are recommended, regardless of the students' backgrounds.
- There is a high number of teaching faculty for the number of courses offered, which makes it difficult to determine the cognizant faculty member responsible for the evaluation and improvement of the course.
- The PSP does not utilize the expertise of the faculty of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources at DUTH, whose involvement may strengthen the Programme significantly.

### III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Establish an external Advisory Board for the PSP. This Board should meet at least once per semester and offer specific recommendations for potential improvements to the PSP.
- Organize small teams of students from different backgrounds to work together on case studies that cover more than one of the focus areas of the PSP. Involve the stakeholders in the selection and execution of these projects.
- Combine the experience gained in the mandatory student internship with the development of the Thesis topic.
- Enhance student mobility to include internships in international schools using ERASMUS student exchanges, and support student participation in research projects, international workshops, and training programmes as part of their final work credits.
- Update the Diploma Supplement to indicate Level 7 as the qualification level, and Level 6 as the admission level. The Supplement should include up-to-date information on the national higher education system. It should consider the fields of study of the qualification “Civil Protection: civil engineering, land management, environmental science, and crisis management”.
- Develop and implement a systematic plan to monitor the teaching and overall workload of faculty members involved in the delivery of the Programme, and introduce appropriate measures to mitigate any excessive burden identified.
- Enhance the level of technical and administrative support available to academic staff, to strengthen their capacity for research and increase overall research productivity.
- Establish and maintain a structured coordination framework for the teaching team, comprising both faculty members and external teaching staff, to ensure regular meetings and open channels of communication that promote appropriate involvement, coherence, and consistency in the delivery of the Programme.
- Design and implement a formal mentoring scheme to support the professional development of early-career faculty members.
- Enhance the visibility and accessibility of student support services by communicating them more regularly. Periodic online briefing sessions and/or a dedicated presentation file sent to each student’s email at the beginning of every semester could be sufficient to achieve this.
- Update the Academic Guide of the PSP to include all student support services that are currently missing and mentioned in the Academic Certification Proposal, such as the Student Ombudsman and the Philologus platform.
- Rephrase/reword the course syllabi and the student handbook to emphasize that the course content is at the postgraduate level. Introduce prerequisites for all courses, especially those that are required. Identify remedial classes in the undergraduate programme that must be taken for no credit by students whose background is not in the main fields of study.
- Enhance the visibility and marketing of the PSP through its presence on the Web and social media. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel believes that this excellent programme can gain higher recognition and social achievement if potential students and the public were more aware of its accomplishments.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 4, 5, 6**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2, 3**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

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

| Overall Judgement       |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant         | <b>X</b> |
| Substantially compliant |          |
| Partially compliant     |          |
| Non-compliant           |          |

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

| <b>Name and Surname</b> | <b>Signature</b>                    |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| KATOPODES NIKOLAOS      | Signed by KATOPODES<br>NIKOLAOS     |
| HARITOS GEORGE          | Signed by HARITOS<br>GEORGE         |
| PANAGOPOULOS THOMAS     | Signed by<br>PANAGOPOULOS<br>THOMAS |
| PHOCAS MARIOS C.        | Signed by PHOCAS<br>MARIOS C.       |
| Tsivolas Konstantinos   | Signed by Tsivolas<br>Konstantinos  |