



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
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Accreditation Report for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Applied Geoinformatics

Department: Geography

Institution: Harokopio University of Athens

Date: July 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 Applied Geoinformatics of
the Harokopio University of Athens 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 Applied Geoinformatics of the Harokopio University of Athens comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. ALVANIDES (ΑΛΒΑΝΙΔΗΣ) SERAPHIM (ΣΕΡΑΦΕΙΜ) (Chair)**
Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg
- 2. KALISPERIS LOUKAS**
Department of Architecture, College of Arts and Architecture, Pennsylvania State University
- 3. KATOPODES NIKOLAOS**
University of Michigan
- 4. Ζυγούρη Ευαγγελία**
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the assessment of the new PSP Applied Geoinformatics of the Harokopio University of Athens (HUA), the External Evaluation & 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, and detailed data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices. The review was conducted via teleconference, which was organized and coordinated by HAHE and the Harokopio University of Athens (HUA). The schedule and agenda of the review were as follows:

Monday 30 June 2025

- Preliminary private meeting of the EEAP members. Brief review on the allocation of tasks and the list of issues to be addressed during the on-line meetings with the Institution.
- Meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, the Head of the Department, the Director of the PSP, MODIP Supervisor. Short overview of the PSP academic profile, status, strengths and possible areas of concern. Discussion on the level of compliance of the PSP to the Standards for Quality Accreditation.
Chryssa Sofianopoulou, Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, Internationalisation and Quality Assurance/President of Quality Assurance Committee
Petros Katsafados, Head of the Geography Department Christos Chalkias, Director of the PSP Applied Geoinformatics
Christina Chazaki, Deputy Head Quality Assurance Department

Tuesday 1 July 2025

- Meeting with the teaching staff of the PSP. Discussion on professional development opportunities, mobility, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, workload, evaluation by students; link between teaching and research; teaching staff involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the programme; areas of weakness.
Department of Geography:
Efthimios Karymbalis, George Petropoulos, Antigoni Faka, Ilias Grammatikiannis, Evangelia Drakou.
Department of Informatics & Telematics:
Dimitrios Michail, Mara Nikolaidou, George Papadopoulos, Vasileios Efthymiou.
- On-line 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. Evaluation of facilities and learning resources to ascertain that the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate for the successful provision of the programme.
Despoina Kaitatzi, Deputy Head Secretariat Geography

Department Polykarpos Papadopoulos, PSP Secretariat
Natassa Zerva, Head Directorate of Academic Affairs &
Personnel Constantia Barda, Career Office

- Meeting with employers, social partners to discuss relations of the programme with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.

Yiannis Contos, Director “Marathon Data Systems” (ESRI official distributor)

Christos Stavrou, Director Department of Cartography & Geospatial Data, Hellenic Statistical Authority

Dimitrios Stefanou, Secretary “Sylvia Ioannou Charitable Foundation”

Ivy Adamakopoulou, Managing Director “Anavasi” Cartographic and Publishing company

- Debriefing private meeting of the EEAP members to reflect on the meetings with academic/administrative staff and external stakeholders, discuss the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepare the oral report.

- Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector, the Director of the PSP, the Head of the Department, MODIP Supervisor. Informal presentation of the EEAP key findings. Discussion of five points raised by the EEAP that required further clarification from the PSP Director and the University administration.

Wednesday 2 July to Saturday 5 July 2025

- Draft report writing with EEAP email communication and virtual meetings. Review and finalization of draft report. Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEAP was in close communication with the Department and the PSP administration, who promptly provided additional information when requested. The EEAP found that the Department and the PSP administration, as well as the faculty, staff, and stakeholders interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable insights.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The postgraduate study programme (PSP) Applied Geoinformatics is interdepartmental, administered by the Department of Geography and offered in close collaboration with the Department of Informatics & Telematics at Harokopio University of Athens (HUA). The PSP represents an evolution of a broader graduate programme running since the academic year 2008-09 up to 2024-25. The new programme corresponds to one of the three specializations of the previous PSP, which operated successfully for twenty years at HUA. The design and delivery of postgraduate programmes is part of the long-term development plan of HUA, which follows the strategic plan for each department and school. The PSP offers a holistic redefinition of the aims and objectives of the previous graduate programme by splitting each of the 3 “directions” to a distinct and independent new PSP Applied Geoinformatics that will be delivered in collaboration with the Department of Informatics & Telematics.

The new PSP Applied Geoinformatics will operate for the first time in the academic year 2025-2026 (HUA Senate approval 503/11-04-2025) under the regulations of the HUA for postgraduate and doctoral studies established by the University Senate (488/23-10-2024). The objective of the PSP is to train students in the development and use of modern information technologies for the collection, management, visualization, analysis and modelling of spatial and temporal data. The PSP supports the complex spatial analysis of natural and social phenomena and challenges, advocating interdisciplinary approaches for addressing them. Furthermore, the PSP aims to contribute towards supporting the effective management of contemporary environmental and social problems at the national and European levels, through the design and development of applications to support decision making on spatial issues. Finally, the PSP aspires to equip graduates with geographical thinking and computational skills in order to meet the current needs of the labour market, from the development of geoinformatics software to the design and development of applications for tackling global challenges, such as urban planning, disaster management, sustainable development and the climate crisis.

Teaching in the PSP is provided by thirteen (13) members of the faculty from both Departments and one (1) laboratory teaching staff (ΕΔΙΠ) from the Department of Informatics & Telematics. In addition, there exists the possibility for instructors from other HUA departments, other universities, government agencies, research institutes and the private sector to contribute to the educational process of the PSP. The maximum number of admitted students per academic year is set to thirty (30), aiming to retain a healthy student to instructor ratio. The PSP requires a minimum of two (2) academic semesters of instructed study, followed by the summer months for undertaking and submitting a compulsory thesis, aiming to complete the studies in September following the admission year. The maximum duration of study is 4 semesters, and if this is exceeded the student is withdrawn. However, at the request of a student, the Board of Directors may extend the duration of studies for serious reasons with a reasoned justification. Each student has the right to request a one-time suspension of studies for a period not exceeding two (2) consecutive semesters and suspension semesters do not count towards the maximum duration of study.

In order to graduate a student should successfully complete 75 ECTS (European Credit

Transfer System): 60 ECTS for coursework and 15 ECTS for the preparation and successful completion of a postgraduate thesis. There is a relatively small number of elective courses offered in the second semester, which allows some flexibility in the study program, considering that a student will be expected to choose 3 from only 5 electives, one of which is a rather generic Research Methodology course. Attendance in lectures is mandatory, and final examinations will be administered in class. There is an extensive description of the measures taken to maintain the integrity of examinations by students in the distant learning version of the program. The EEAP could not interview any current students or recent graduates due to the classification of the PSP as a “new” Programme by HAHE. However, most of the stakeholders are also employers of the previous version of the PSP and provided glowing remarks regarding the skills and qualities of past graduates. They also mentioned research collaborations with HUA faculty and students during work placements and research projects, making a strong case for the overall reputation of the two Departments.

The PSP equips graduates with skills in Applied Geoinformatics, leading to careers in the public and private sector. In addition, a small fraction of graduates continues with doctoral studies. There are strong links to the needs of society and the environment, which are key priorities of the PSP Applied Geoinformatics. Presently the Department of Geography offers one (1) graduate programme with three “directions”. Starting with the academic year 2025-2026, the Department of Geography will offer two (2) graduate programmes, including the PSP under review (in collaboration with the Department of Informatics & Telematics), and plans to introduce a third programme in the following academic year. The department also maintains a very active programme in doctoral and postdoctoral studies.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

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

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY. INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The University Senate approved the establishment of a new interdepartmental Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) titled "Applied Geoinformatics" administered by the Department of Geography, in collaboration with the Department of Informatics & Telematics at Harokopio University of Athens. According to the minutes of the University Senate meeting 503/11-04-2025, the new PSP will commence in the 2025-2026 academic year and aims to promote scientific knowledge and research in the design, development and management of Geoinformatics applications. The new PSP program is a continuation of the successful operation of the Postgraduate Program with a related subject within the framework of the three-track Postgraduate Program entitled "Applied Geography and Spatial Management". The transformation into an interdepartmental PSP in collaboration with the Department of Informatics & Telematics is based on academic, scientific and social reasons such as: the interdisciplinary approach of the subject, the updating of the curriculum based on modern developments, the development of academic links between the two collaborating departments and the formation of graduates with a dynamic profile that meets the needs of the labour market.

The intentions of the PSP are to holistically train specialized scientists and practitioners capable of meeting the labour market demands of both public and private sectors and social institutions. The PSP will equip graduates with skills to design, develop and use modern information technologies for the collection,

management, rendering/visualization, analysis and modelling of spatial and temporal data. Additionally, they will be exposed to interdisciplinary approaches for the analysis of natural and social phenomena and challenges and decision-making practices for addressing them using Geoinformatics with emphasis on its applications.

The new PSP is designed to be completed within one academic year and consists of courses over two academic semesters (30 ECTS per semester, adding up to 60 ECTS) followed by the completion of a compulsory thesis during the summer months (15 ECTS). The learning outcomes and acquired qualifications from this PSP are fully compatible with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (level 7). The achievement of quality within the PSP and the optimization of processes in all areas (educational, research, administrative, etc.) is monitored, assessed, and evaluated through defined quality indicators per applicable legislation and the European or National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Level 7. To implement this policy, both collaborating Departments commits to the following processes and procedures for monitoring and continuous improvement of the quality of the PSP:

- Establishment of an appropriate structure and organization of the postgraduate studies programs
- Pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications set by the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education level 7.
- Evaluation of the quality and effectiveness teaching in the PSP through the MODIP questionnaire.
- Selection of qualified teaching faculty with significant research records.
- Drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality objectives to achieve program improvement.
- Produce qualified graduates who are competitive in the labour market and monitor their job placements.
- Maintain quality support services, such as administrative services, libraries, and student welfare services for the PSP.
- Ensure efficient management of the financial resources of the PSP to achieve a budget neutral program.
- Conduct an annual internal evaluation and review of the quality assurance system for the PSP in collaboration with the OMEA and the MODIP of the Institution, following process 4, "Internal Evaluation" of the University's Internal Quality Assurance System.

II. Analysis

The PSP Applied Geoinformatics has a reasonably developed structure towards completion within one academic year and conforms to the regulations for establishing a new PSP, having received the approval of the University Senate of the Harokopio University of Athens. The PSP's profile and learning outcomes meet the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education

Level 7. The teaching faculty of the PSP from both collaborating Departments, who also have high-quality research records, fully support this statement. The curriculum aims to educate competent and competitive graduates who will meet the growing demand in the labour market (private, public, and social institutions). The curriculum is comprehensive in scope and provides students with specialized knowledge for designing and managing geographical interventions at various scales in urban and regional areas using Geoinformatics. The curriculum equips students with expert skills for the collection, analysis and interpretation of geospatial data, advanced applications for geospatial problems, spatial database and big data management, decision support with geospatial tools, open data and geospatial governance policies, and research skills for innovation in geoinformatics. The PSP adheres to a detailed Quality Assurance Policy with achievable and measurable goals to provide the basis for the program's success and future improvement.

III. Conclusions

The program is fully compliant with Principle 1.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R1.1. Strengthen and promote ties with foreign universities to enhance faculty and student mobility. These ties will be helpful in future evaluations of the PSP and help with the employment of program graduates.

R1.2. Enhance collaborations with other universities by actively utilizing opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ program. The two collaborating Departments should promote these opportunities more prominently among students. Additionally, consider inviting distinguished academics, researchers and practitioners from abroad and implementing other initiatives to increase the visibility of the new PSP.

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 new PSP Applied Geoinformatics is a derivative of the existing Postgraduate Programme in the Department of Geography at Harokopio University, which has successfully operated for approximately 20 years. In this effort, the existing three-track Postgraduate Programme entitled “Applied Geography and Spatial Management”, is transformed into three independent Postgraduate Programs, whose focus and mission have been redefined for several reasons. The new PSP represents an evolution of the existing PSP in the spirit of continuous improvement and modernization of the study programme and curriculum, aiming to address emerging needs in the academic community, labour market, and society. More importantly, the new PSP is an interdepartmental venture with the Department of Informatics & Telematics aiming to incorporate knowledge and skills of information technology in the field of Geography.

Like the existing programme, the new PSP was designed to provide a comprehensive training in both research and practical application in the fields of Geography and Informatics with emphasis on sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life. The main goal of the PSP remains the same, i.e. to help new scientists develop innovative, interdisciplinary skills that enhance the links between research and practice.

The new PSP is structured to ensure that the duration of the study programme is limited to two semesters, with a cumulative provision of 75 ECTS credits, i.e. 30 ECTS credits for each semester and 15 credits for a post-graduate thesis. It is expected that the development and writing of the thesis will be completed during the summer months following the academic year of study. The curriculum and thesis work are designed to motivate students to participate in research projects directed by the teaching faculty. The programme will confer a Level 7 Degree, following the National and European Qualifications Frameworks.

There is no explicit mention of any plans for the students to engage in international exchange initiatives, like ERASMUS+, to experience teaching and research approaches at other European Union universities. Also, the new PSP does not provide opportunities for external internships offered by relevant

organizations. However, there is increased emphasis on exposing the students to research conducted in the department's laboratories and field explorations. The curriculum has been designed by qualified experts in the fields of Geography and Informatics, and is aligned with the global standards in science and technology. The structure of the curriculum is satisfactorily geared toward the advertised scientific and learning objectives. The Student Guide is fairly complete, concise and appropriate.

The duration of studies and total number of ECTS granted by the new PSP differ from those of its sister PSP on Climate Crisis, Risks, and Disasters. The new design aims at reducing the time for graduation and addressing faster emerging market needs.

The curriculum revision has not formally involved consultation from stakeholders, external experts, students, and graduates of the PSP. The proposal submitted to the EEAP simply mentions that the design of the new programme was based on (a) the strategic plan of the University, (b) experience of external agencies, and (c) international experience in Geo-Informatics.

During the meeting with the EEAP, it was evident that there is a strong connection between the external stakeholders and the teaching faculty of the PSP. Several of the participants indicated that they have provided feedback to the Department of Geography as individuals. However, despite previous recommendations, an external advisory board has not been formed to date. It is worth mentioning that the collaborating department of Informatics and Telematics does have an external advisory board, however, there is no evidence that it was engaged in the development of the subject PSP.

II. Analysis

The Department of Geography at Harokopio University is a leading institution in Greece and is highly competitive abroad. The PSP is led and delivered by highly qualified scholars, who not only monitor the new developments in the field, but are among the ones defining the emerging needs of Geographic Sciences. To that end, the faculty have redesigned the study program, in order to include new subjects and methods. The external stakeholders made glowing remarks regarding the quality of the programme and the qualifications of its graduates.

The PSP's academic profile and contributions to the field of Geography are outstanding. The scientific aims and areas of specialization are clearly articulated and made transparent in the PSP proposal, and the curriculum is designed to provide students with new skills for the practical application of their knowledge. The programme recognizes the importance of integrating the expertise of external stakeholders and professionals from the labour market; however, there is no evidence of any formal involvement of these groups in the design of the program.

The student workload follows the guidelines of ECTS for level 7, aiming at a graduate level educational experience. However, the lack of prerequisites for all

courses in the curriculum undermines the graduate character of the program, especially because the new PSP hopes to attract students from various disciplines. Furthermore, there are no admission filters and contingencies or remedial courses articulated clearly, which may endanger the success of the students.

III. Conclusions

The design and approval process of the new PSP Applied Geoinformatics has been satisfactory. This PSP may become a popular graduate programme in Greece following some modifications of the study program. Finally, the PSP will benefit significantly if an external advisory board is created.

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. Ensure that an External Advisory Board is formed and active by the time the PSP starts. The Board should comprise members of the private and public sectors, graduates, and other program stakeholders. The EEAP meeting with employers and social partners demonstrated the eagerness of participants to work with both Departments towards improving the new PSP.

R2.2. Introduce prerequisite courses in the curriculum and articulate contingencies for admission, including the successful completion of remedial courses.

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 proposed programme is a joint effort of the Department of Geography and the Department of Informatics & Telematics at the Harokopio University. The EEAP has confirmed that predefined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place. The admission criteria are somewhat clear but not explicitly defined with respect to students entering the PSP with diverse backgrounds. The PSP adheres to the same admission criteria as other state universities in Greece, in accordance with national law. The programme has proposed processes and mechanisms to support incoming students and is proposing a welcoming and engaging environment. A student support and services system are in place to assist students with academic and personal challenges.

Predefined, published, and clear regulations regarding student progression are in place. All regulations and information are conveyed to students clearly and transparently. All academic and other relevant data are readily available to students on the PSP website and the Harokopio University website. 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. The proposed PSP has established processes and mechanisms for student progress to be continuously monitored in order to ensure that students have registered for the expected courses each semester, and that they have been assigned a post-graduate report and a supervisor in their thesis, during the summer semester. The necessary administrative support and technological infrastructure are in place for delivering the programme.

Appropriate recognition procedures are in place and align with standards. Graduation requires a total of 75 ECTS, of which 60 ECTS are obtained from 5 compulsory courses (four in the 1st Semester and one in the 2nd Semester) each worth 7.5 ECTS, 3 elective courses (three electives required out of five courses offered) each worth 7.5 ECTS and 15 ECTS are allocated for the Thesis. There are well-defined criteria for the completion of the Thesis, which can take various forms. The Thesis is proposed to be completed over the summer months which may be a challenge for the scholarly work required by the students. Various scholarship opportunities and awards are available to students.

Certification procedures are established, and students are properly informed about them. A Diploma Supplement is provided to all graduates of the programme in Greek and English. Receiving the postgraduate Diploma allows graduates to enhance their profiles more effectively, both professionally and academically, at national and European levels.

II. Analysis

The PSP Applied Geoinformatics employs effective processes and tools to properly manage, coordinate, and address student admission, progression, recognition, and certification. The internal assessment mechanisms are well-developed and enable 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 programme adequately addresses all individual aspects required to ensure student admission, progression, and completion of studies. However, the EEAP also expressed some concerns in the following areas:

The workload required for the thesis, as is defined in the proposal, is not reflected in the ECTS count assigned to the Thesis nor the expected timeframe completion (summer months). The EEAP is appreciative of the proposed changes to the length of the Thesis presented through communication with the Director of the PSP (i.e. reduction of the length of the thesis document to 12K- 15K words). However, the EEAP's suggestion during the accreditation meetings was to combine the Thesis and the Research Methods course towards 22.5 ECTS in order to ensure the academic and scientific quality of the thesis. Finally, the student mobility in the PSP appears limited, even though industry and government partners / employers have emphasized the value of practical experience and site visits.

III. Conclusions

The programme employs effective processes and tools to properly manage, coordinate, and address student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

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

R3.1. The PSP should develop more personalized communication strategy, to ensure all students are fully engaged and receive an enhanced learning experience having the opportunity of optional courses.

R3.2. Explore models of integration for the Research Methods elective course as a compulsory course in preparation for the Thesis.

R3.3. The curriculum committee should consult with all stakeholders and partners and should have a schedule of recurrent meetings and consultations. Central administration should facilitate such endeavours.

R3.4. The PSP should implement a mechanism to ensure that all students receive a minimum level of practical training activities before graduating and to have the option for developing a report of training instead of a research-oriented Thesis.

R3.5. Consider offering some courses prior to or in conjunction with the first semester to support students with a degree in fields other than Geography or Informatics & Telematics.

R3.6. Encourage multi- and interdisciplinary collaborations among the students themselves in the development of their research based on group assignments and physical attendance. Facilitate collaborations in project developments and implementations with social bodies of competence and community authorities.

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 EEAP found that the teaching staff of the PSP Applied Geoinformatics has excellent qualifications to teach the programme's courses.

There are 14 members of teaching staff involved with the proposed PSP, including 8 full-time faculty members from the Department of Geography, and 5 full-time faculty members as well as one non-tenure track members (ΕΔΙΠ) from the Department of Informatics & Telematics. Overall, there are 6 Assistant Professors, 1 Associate Professor, and 6 Full Professors. The additional adjunct teaching staff is a member of the Informatics Department with significant experience in the topics of the PSP. The members of the teaching staff are also involved in the activities of the significant undergraduate programmes and the additional postgraduate programmes in both Department.

The teaching load for faculty members varies between 4 and 7 courses in both the undergraduate and graduate programmes per year. Additionally, most of them supervise a significant number of postgraduate projects and conduct administrative duties. The workload and the limited technical and administrative support could prove to be challenging and demanding, allowing only limited time

for research activities, which results in generally decent research and publication records for most faculty members, especially since a significant number of the teaching staff are at the Assistant/Associate and should be developing their scholarly record and legacy for future advancement. The EEAP is appreciative of the proposed change to the Student-Teacher Contact Workload for each of the proposed courses of the PSP presented to us through the communication with the Director of the PSP (i.e. reducing the laboratory contact hours from 35 to 24). However, the change does not ameliorate the concern that the workload for faculty members could be substantial and beyond the norm without the formal engagement of assistants and collaborators.

The faculty members seem to be well connected with numerous research teams both nationally and internationally. The industry supporters and stake holders of this PSP spoke enthusiastically for the proposed programme and offered to make available to the programme their significant expertise and resources. The EEAP was impressed with the standing and expertise of the external stakeholders representing significant public and private entities in the area of Geoinformatics.

II. Analysis

Both departments offer some opportunities for Erasmus teaching mobility through several international collaborations. The student-to-teacher ratio in this PSP is appropriate, enhancing the learning experience. It is the intention of the faculty that a number of students graduating from the proposed programme would pursue doctoral studies, and as such significantly contributing to the academic goals of the faculty members in promoting their academic objectives and securing research funding. However, the research output of most faculty members teaching in this programme could be enhanced.

While the non-faculty teaching staff's research experience is crucial for this programme, the opportunities afforded by the industry efforts should be made to increase the connection between research and practice. There is also a need to improve the gender balance among the teaching staff. Additionally, the teaching staff require more technical and administrative support to fulfil their teaching duties and to have more time and energy for research activities. It is imperative that the teaching load of the teaching staff is ameliorated with the formal engagement of internal and external collaborators and assistants that are formally defined as part of the programme.

III. Conclusions

Faculty members are adept at teaching their assigned topics and bring commendable benefits to the PSP through their extensive networks with national and international partners from academia, as well as the private and public sectors. Allocating additional resources for professional development, technical, and administrative support for the teaching staff is strongly recommended.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R4.1. Increase the number of teaching staff to enhance the academic viability and diversity of the PSP. Engage, formally, internal & external collaborators and assistants that are formally defined as part of the programme.

R4.2. Increase the support for faculty and staff with internal and external formal collaborations with other PSPs and external stakeholders.

R4.3. Increase the support for and motivation of the teaching staff for research, mobility, and recognition.

R4.4. Enhance the collaboration with stakeholders in the professional development of teaching staff.

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 University makes available a number of facilities to cover teaching and learning needs for the duration of the PSP, such as: 1) the library and information centre of the University, 2) the welfare, counselling and equality centre for teaching staff and students), 3) the student service centre which includes health coverage issues, the career office and the internships office, 4) the foreign language centre, where students can enrol in free classes for English, French and German, 5) the student restaurant and 6) the student counsellor and the counsellor for students with special learning needs.

The Department of Geography includes 3 teaching rooms, as well as a seminar room and 4 laboratories. A 30-person teaching room equipped with 15

computers is dedicated solely to the Master's courses and students. These computers as well as the computers in the laboratories are equipped with a number of specific pieces of both commercial and open-source software (such as GIS, programming, statistical and remote sensing software), most of which are also available via students' personal computers using their University credentials. The university also provides a range of IT services via the Information and Networks Centre and the corresponding student portal, as well as an asynchronous learning platform and access to cloud storage. All students will have access to all available rooms and laboratory equipment for their thesis research and other projects related to the PSP. One of the laboratories will be used exclusively for the PSP and is equipped with 15 computers, where various pieces of software will be available (ArcGIS 10.x, Q-GIS, SAGA, Python, MATLAB, SPSS, GeoDa, GWR, R, ENVI, ILWIS, GAMMA, SNAP).

Regarding the PSP teaching staff, it is comprised of 14 members, 8 of which are members of the Department of Geography and 6 are members of the Department of Informatics and Telematics. There are 3 administrative staff members, one of which covers the existing PSP programme of the Department. There is also additional teaching and technical staff from various research and development projects run by the Department's teaching staff.

The Student Guide gives a detailed and concise description of all available student services.

A tuition utilisation plan was submitted by the Department in the context of this report based on revenues and costs for 30 students per year, with a 30% maximum tuition exemption positions.

II. Analysis

The University and the two Departments offer a variety of students services and resources for the successful implementation of this new PSP, all of which are functional and easily accessible. The teaching resources will cover the courses' learning objectives. The administrative staff is sufficient and competent to ensure the smooth operation of the student support services, with years of experience from the Department's previous PSP.

The matter of primary data obtainment for the thesis research was discussed at the meetings with the Institution representatives and the various and competent external stakeholders, who were willing to provide data for and participate in related publications. There are also research projects implemented by the teaching staff and collaborations with private and public institutions and companies, which may provide the students with data and additional funding.

According to the submitted tuition utilisation plan, the tuition fees will solely cover the operational costs, such as the teachers' fees, equipment and software

costs, administrative support (an administrative assistant will be employed for the PSP), scholarships (9 students maximum), promotional activities where possible and a 30% which is allocated to the Special Account for Research Grants) (“ELKE”) and the University.

III. Conclusions

The learning resources and student support are in line with the standards of the HAHE.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R5.1. Given the short duration of the PSP it is essential to inform students at the start of the first semester about the available resources, existing research projects, public and private sector partnerships with both Departments and collaborations with other research and academic institutes, so that they can make informed decisions when selecting their thesis project, depending on their research interests.

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 new PSP Applied Geoinformatics promises to follow the principles and standards of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) of the Department of Geography. The self-assessment of the PSP will be based on procedures that create a learning environment for the students that follow the strategic plan of Harokopio University. Assessment methods will include student workload, expectations, and an assessment of student satisfaction. Additionally, the PSP self-assessment will take into consideration technological developments, societal

and job market needs, and national and European policies.

The PSP coordination committee will collect information from the student evaluations and proposals by the faculty for an annual evaluation of the programme. The annual report will be submitted to MODIP for review, and recommendations will be shared with the general faculty assembly. Decisions for improvement will be made at the end of the academic year.

Although the existing PSP has been in operation for almost 20 years, the EEAP did not have the opportunity to interview students or alumni of the Program. The only information contained in the accreditation proposal regarding student evaluations was the average and standard deviation for the academic year 2022-2023. Furthermore, the EEAP did not receive any information regarding previous external evaluations or surveys of alumni and external stakeholders. However, during the meeting with selected stakeholders, it became evident that the existing programme is highly respected in the profession.

II. Analysis

The PSP has created a process for internal review and continuous improvement. If it is followed, the strengths of the programme will be reinforced on an annual basis. The information collected through student evaluations will be studied and documented. Programme weaknesses will be addressed and remedies will be provided. These plans do not include any quantitative course or programme assessment; thus, even if they are successful, it will not be possible to monitor actual student learning.

To date, graduate programs in the Department of Geography have been reviewed and revised without the direct involvement of external stakeholders. A formal External Advisory Board has not been established yet despite the suggestions of previous evaluations. Furthermore, the Department has not documented any progress on how they address recommendations of previous external evaluations.

III. Conclusions

In general, the proposed self-assessment process of the programme is adequate; however, it does not include a formal participation of students, alumni and external stakeholders. Documentation of the efforts addressing the recommendations of previous external evaluations is missing. There are no plans for course or programme assessment.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R6.1. Establish an External Advisory Board to enhance further development of the Programme and to create a permanent link with the professional world.

R6.2. Publish detailed information on student evaluations.

R6.3. Initiate a course assessment process and monitor student learning.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

Harokopio University of Athens has implemented compliant and efficient mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring high-quality education and services relative to the PSP Applied Geoinformatics. The existing quality assurance and continuous improvement policy and practices followed by the PSP align with the strategic objectives of both Departments (Geography and Informatics & Telematics) and of the University.

The EEAP identified the following aspects of good practice:

- Excellent collaboration between teaching staff with diverse backgrounds and interest from two different Departments, demonstrating enthusiasm and dedication to their mission.
- Excellent research record and academic profile of the faculty, consisting almost entirely of permanent faculty in the two Departments, which allows for accountability, continuity, and sustainability of the PSP.
- The interdepartmental PSP is unique in offering an interdisciplinary perspective with substantive, in-depth coverage of Geoinformatics courses from both perspectives.
- The graduates of this PSP have high potential for employment in public or private positions.
- The enthusiasm of employers, social partners and stakeholders is evident. They unanimously praised Harokopio University, the Department of Geography and the prospects of the PSP, indicating a strong need for the graduates with this profile.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The EEAP identified high workloads for some of the teaching staff. Although teaching engagement with the PSP is optional by staff, there may be underlying pressures to engage, for example in relation to promotions or access to funds.
- There is neither an External Advisory Board nor a formal, well-defined process for engagement of stakeholders (e.g. potential employers, graduate students etc.) in curriculum design, evaluation and improvement.
- Some of the courses (e.g. Research Methods) do not reflect the postgraduate level. There are no prerequisites to the courses, and there are no formally required remedial courses regardless of the background of incoming students.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

In addition to the 18 specific recommendations to the 6 principles, the EEAP is highlighting the following 5 recommendations for follow-up actions:

1. Establish an External Advisory Board (EAB) to enhance the further development and delivery of the programme and to create a permanent link with the outside professional world.
2. Consult with all stakeholders in the development of the curriculum on an annual basis, at a minimum. Encourage research thesis project, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Enhance the collaboration with stakeholders in the professional development of teaching staff. Create an extensive library of thesis topics, from which the students could select.
3. Institutionalize annual internal reviews, as well as external evaluations, organized by the Programme itself every 4 years. Implement promptly the evaluation recommendations.
4. Develop a proper electronic presence which should include: students' theses, organizing of its alumni, relevant information for prospective incoming ERASMUS+ students.
5. Increase the number of the teaching staff and formally engage internal and external collaborators and assistants that are formally defined as part of the programme.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1,3,4,5**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2,6**

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

ALVANIDES (ΑΛΒΑΝΙΔΗΣ) SERAPHIM (ΣΕΡΑΦΕΙΜ)

Signed by ALVANIDES (ΑΛΒΑΝΙΔΗΣ)
SERAPHIM (ΣΕΡΑΦΕΙΜ)

KALISPERIS LOUKAS

Signed by KALISPERIS LOUKAS

KATOPODES NIKOLAOS

Signed by KATOPODES NIKOLAOS

Ζυγούρη Ευαγγελία

Signed by Ζυγούρη Ευαγγελία