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Accreditation Report for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems

Department: Informatics and Telematics

Institution: Harokopio University of Athens

Date: November 2024



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 on **Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems** 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 Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems of the Harokopio University of Athens comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Dr. Elias Pimenidis (Chair)**
University of the West of England, Bristol, UK
- 2. Prof. Emeritus Nicolas Spyrtos**
Université Paris-Saclay & CNRS, France
- 3. Dr. Fivos Andritsos**
European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Italy
- 4. Dr. Panagiotis Kosmas**
King's College London, UK
- 5. Ms Eftychia Mavrou**
University of West Attica, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) was formed in early-November 2024 and received the accreditation support material concerning the new Postgraduate Study Programme on Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems (henceforth ACSIS) about a week prior to the accreditation visit. The review was organized by HAHE and the Dept. of Communication and Digital Media at the Harokopio University of Athens. The quality of the support material was excellent. All documents were very well crafted and designed. During the visit, all the participants involved (MODIP, Teaching staff and External Stakeholders) were very prompt to provide us with all the information we asked for. The meetings took place on 18 and 19 November 2024 and were conducted online utilizing zoom video conference facilities. All meetings took place in a very friendly and cooperative spirit.

The timetable and agenda of the accreditation review were as follows:

On Monday 18 November 2024, the EEAP members had a short meeting to organize the accreditation review and allocate the different tasks.

On Tuesday 19 November 2024, the EEAP had the welcome meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, the Head of the Department, the Director of the PSP, the President of MODIP and Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, the Director of the new GMAD programme, the Head of the Department, and Professor Mara Nikolaidou representing the Steering Committee. Brief and informative presentations were made by the President of MODIP as to the process and the steps taken to develop and approve the PSP within the University, the Head of Department providing a background to the department's overall activities, and the Director of the PSP on the main features of the programme. The meeting concluded with a discussion on strengths and possible areas of concern, and the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation.

Next the EEAP met with the teaching staff members. We discussed their workload, professional development opportunities, methods for student evaluations, teaching and research activities. The EEAP unanimously decided to view the informative videos regarding the facilities and equipment's adequacy in private. The videos were kindly provided to them by the department.

After viewing the videos, the EEAP met with potential employers and social partners that presented different types of collaboration with the Department. The stakeholders were from the private and public sector and spoke very highly about the proposed academic endeavour. After the end of this meeting, the EEAP members met in a separate zoom meeting to discuss and reflect on their first impressions and prepare a brief oral presentation of the findings.

The EEAP had its last meeting of the day with the Vice-Rector/ and President of MODIP, the Head of the Department, the Director of the PSP and Steering Committee/ OMEA members, during which additional comments and clarifications were discussed. The EEAP gave a short preliminary verbal report about their impressions and key findings.

Members of the EEAP wish to thank the Harokopio University of Athens for arranging and hosting these meetings and for the exceptional spirit of openness and collaboration with which it responded to the queries of the Panel over the course of the virtual accreditation visit.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

Harokopio University of Athens (HUA) was established under Article 9 of Law 1894/90, with the title “Higher Education Institution of Home Economics”, successively amended, by Article 17 of Law 1966/91, to “Harokopio Higher Education Institution of Home Economics” and, finally, by the Presidential Decree 306/1999, to “Harokopio University of Athens - HUA”. Its first two Departments, established by the Presidential Decree 206/1993, were:

- a) The Department of Home Economics, renamed in 1999 to Department of Home Economics and Ecology and, in 2020, to Department of Economics and Sustainable Development.
- b) The Department of Dietetics, renamed in 1999 to Department of Dietetics and Nutrition Science.

In 1999 and 2006, two more Departments were established by the Presidential Decrees 210/1999 and 125/2006 respectively:

- c) The Department of Geography, accepting its first students in 2000.
- d) The Department of Informatics and Telematics, starting its operation in 2007.

Later, with the Presidential Decree 77/2013, HUA was organized into three Schools as follows:

- The School of Environment, Geography and Applied Economics, which includes the Departments (a) and (c).
- The School of Health and Education Sciences, which includes the Department (b).
- The School of Digital Technology, which includes the Department (d).

Today, the HUA offers Undergraduate Programs, named after the corresponding Departments, MSc Postgraduate Programs, Doctoral Programs and Lifelong Learning Programs.

The Department of Informatics and Telematics of the Harokopio University of Athens delivers knowledge and conducts research in the areas of Data Science and Algorithms, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Advanced Computing Systems, Internet of Everything and Next-Generation Networks, and Technology Management - Information Systems (IS).

The Postgraduate Study Program titled Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems (ACSIS) is the fourth taught PSP that has been designed by the department and aims to introduce three specialist themes in the domain areas of Computer Science and Information Systems. The PSP will launch in 2025 and aims to recruit graduates from the department’s own undergraduate programme, as well as similar programmes in other Universities which produce graduates in the fields of computer science, information systems.

The teaching staff in the department can amply cover all modules in the PSP as their collective research addresses all required knowledge areas. Each member of staff will be involved with one module allowing them to support students on the PSP appropriately.

The programme supports three themes of study, namely Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, Cloud / Edge Systems and Applications and Information Systems Management and Digital Transformation. These adhere to the Department’s research directions and address job marketplace requirements. The three themes offered comprise modern topics

that are high in demand in the Greek job market and across most of the technologically advanced countries around the world. The Cloud Computing theme appears quite unique in its offering in the Greek higher education provision and it is not often encountered as an individual theme of study worldwide. As such it is expected to make the PSP quite attractive to graduates seeking specialization.

The ACSIS accepts a maximum of 60 graduates as students. The programme spans over 12 calendar months full time or 24 months part time. For the first two semesters, students take modules core and optional (depending on the theme of study) with the last three months devoted to the completion of their dissertation. To graduate with their postgraduate degree the following requirements must be fulfilled: 60 ECTS from the taught modules and 15 ECTS from their dissertation. Each of the taught semester comprises 5 taught modules, with students required to complete six core modules relevant to their theme of studies and 4 optional modules. Optional modules can be taken by students that are enrolled in any of the three themes. Industry-driven dissertations in collaboration with private or public organizations are encouraged.

The programme aims to train graduates to meet European and international standards; prepare highly-skilled professionals for the market; connect education with research and foster a continuous improvement culture in quality. It also aims to achieve academic goals on schedule, continuously update the content based on market needs and relevant findings. Finally, it aims to provide a supportive teaching and learning environment, and to align development activities with national, European, and university goals.

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 object of this accreditation report is the new MSc program of the Department of Informatics and Telematics (DIT), scheduled to start in 2025. The proposed program will span over one full year but can be extended over 3 academic semesters, depending on the duration of the thesis and the training practice. It is well-structured in three streams, which are well defined and complementary. DIT claims that the incoming PSP students will likely be IT graduates or graduates / professionals from other engineering or applied science fields. The proposed PSP is in line with Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as well as with the corresponding European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

The DIT/HUA strategy from which this PSP resulted is outlined in the following documents:

- I. *HUA Strategic Development Plan*: it is a rather generic document, both in terms of goals and strategic values. It responds well to the HAHE guidelines but offers very little substance, especially as to the specificities of the Institution or the potential competitive edge of its offerings.
- II. *DIT/HUA Strategic Plan for Research*: it provides a comprehensive analysis of the potential DIT application space and outlines well the present DIT situation and the Department's goals and development strategy. The only thing missing is the DIT integration within its host institution and the complementarity / collaboration with the rest of the HUA departments.

II. Analysis

The new Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) of Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems has all the prerequisites to fulfill all HAHE requirements, as listed in points (a.) through

(i.). The only concern of the Panel regards the overall strategy of HUA and the alignment of DIT to that strategy. More in particular:

Upon its establishment, HUA's offering covered a well-defined niche, unique in the Greek higher education spectrum, focused in household economy and nutrition with a consequent strong proper identity. Since then, HUA's offering has broadened substantially, as reflected also by the consecutive changes in the title of its departments. The most recent Department, that of Informatics and Telematics (DIT), continued that trend. Instead of focusing in complementing the other HUA departments with the relevant IT tools, services and applications (i.e. GIS, smart home, health & nutrition apps etc.), complementing and strengthening the HUA's offering, DIT chose to develop towards yet another generic IT department. In fact, the present DIT/HUA offering is far from unique and overlaps with a number of Greek higher education departments.

The specific PSP is well-structured and covers some important modern fields (i.e. cloud applications). It is rather generic: it offers additional important knowledge to IT professionals but no specialization in specific application fields. Given the lack of IT professionals in Greece and Europe, such strategy may be profitable in the short term, especially in what concerns the demand for the PSP but, in the long term, it may be detrimental as it may deprive HUA of its specificity and the consequent competitive edge.

This fact is reflected also in the provided DIT/HUA documentation, which is of rather good quality but too generic: by changing the titles and some names and keywords, many of the documents provided could fit any other department or higher education establishment.

III. Conclusions

The new Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) of Advances in Computer Science and Information Systems is well-structured fulfilling all HAHE technical requirements in terms of structure, learning outcomes, quality of the teaching staff, infrastructure and support services. The Panel has every reason to believe that the PSP will use its resources efficiently and, within the context of the HUA QA structure, all necessary QA procedures will be implemented.

The best quality indicator of an educational establishment is the success of its alumni in their career. Hence, DIT is encouraged, along with the other HUA departments, to take all possible measures / actions towards an effective tracking of the professional development and career of its future alumni.

The specific PSP, which is presented as the most important post-graduate program offering of DIT, is well-structured and covers some important modern IT fields. However, it is too generic: in fact, DIT could fit under almost any Greek higher education establishment. If an undergraduate IT program could be conceived as providing the students with a broad range of generic IT competencies, a post-graduate program should provide specialized competencies, complementing / integrating with the rest of the host institution offerings. The Panel commends DIT for their work but thinks that this PSP, and possibly other future DIT PSPs, should be aligned with the HUA application fields, contributing towards strengthening rather than diffusing HUA character and focus.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- P1.1 DIT, should revise its strategy, in particular concerning the streamlining of its research and post-graduate offering with the rest of the HUA departments, contributing towards a distinct HUA identity.
- P1.2 Consequently, the PSP should adapt to the strategy quoted above, possibly by focusing to applications / technologies particularly relevant to HUA (i.e. GIS, smart home, health & nutrition apps etc.), complementing and strengthening the HUA's overall offering.
- P1.3 DIT is encouraged to take all possible measures / actions towards an effective tracking of the professional development and career of its future PSP alumni.

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 development of the Study Programme has been guided by Harokopio's relevant policies, following a clear and well-defined procedure. The EEAP found the title of the proposed MSc a bit too general, but its three streams(flows) are well defined, complementary, and offer opportunities for comprehensive as well as specialized studies in important areas of Informatics. The EEAP found the "Cloud/Edge Systems and Applications" stream as an interesting differentiator, as it is an important but rarely offered direction in existing MSc programmes in Greece (and beyond). The planned courses are offered by teaching staff who are experts in their respective areas. The teaching staff aim to apply teaching practices which incorporate research and industry-targeted elements and who can help students deepen their knowledge and acquire and practice relevant skills. Specifically, there seem to be good links with industry who are keen to host MSc diploma projects in their companies, and the staff promote a culture of engagement with research by involving interested students in research projects, organizing seminars, etc.

The EEAP also found that the programme has been designed in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 7, thereby ensuring advanced academic and professional knowledge, skills and competences provided by the MSc studies. The anticipated student workload also seems to be in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for Level 7. The institution's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), which oversees the process of internal and external evaluation of Harokopio's programmes, has provided guidance in the preparation and documentation of the new programme, ensuring that documents such as the Student Guide adhere to the institution's general policies and that the relevant regulatory framework and official procedure for the approval of the PSP by the Institution has been followed.

II. Analysis

Given Harokopio's culture of student-centered learning and training, the EEAP is confident that the programme will achieve active involvement of students, including encouragement to acquire work experience through engagement with external industry stakeholders who have close relations with the programme and Institution. The need for the programme's graduates in the labour market is clear, and it was articulated by both the relevant study undertaken by the department as well as the interviews with industry representatives including the President of the Board of The Federation of Hellenic ICT Enterprises (SEPE).

Regarding the quality of teaching, the EAAP is satisfied with the level of specialization and variety of the offered courses. The teaching assignments per subject area and per course also seemed well established. It was particularly encouraging to hear the teaching staff describe their modern, student-focused approach to teaching and assessment, and their awareness for the need for clear learning and training outcomes which balance research-informed theory with more practical and soft skills. The EAAP found that the Student Guide and Course Contents documents could have provided more guidance to the students about what to expect from the programme; more details on this topic will be provided in the Recommendations section of the report.

The EEAP is also satisfied with the practice of using feedback questionnaires to gather information about the content and delivery of the offered courses. The department publicizes this feedback (except for specific comments), which is also good practice. One challenge with acting on this

feedback is that it is collected at the end of the module, and therefore students do not have the opportunity to hear back from the course lecturers about their feedback. A strategy for tackling this challenge and offering students the opportunity to receive “feedback on their feedback” is proposed in the Recommendations section.

III. Conclusions

The EEAP is satisfied with the programme’s design and approach towards the educational aspects covering Principle 2. The programme has been designed to benefit from the Institution’s tradition in student-centered learning, and the department’s links with research and industry.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EAAP recommends the following two actions:

- The teaching staff pays more attention to producing course contents which share the same format, structure, and methodology in their description. For example, there are clear instructions in modern teaching theory about how learning outcomes should be defined (active verbs focusing on what the student will achieve by the end of the module). Assessment methods should also be more clearly described. The teaching staff could assign one member to oversee this process and homogenize the course contents description towards modern standards who can help the students appreciate what is offered.
- Teaching feedback is organized twice in the duration of the course. The first is organized half-way, which would allow the lecturer to comment on the feedback and announce actions to tackle identified problems in its delivery. The second is delivered at the end as it is now. Publicizing the results should be accompanied with comments by the lecturer. Moreover, it would also be useful for the students if the lecturer published some comments/feedback on the results of the assessment for each module.

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 department has followed appropriate procedures in the design and planning of all activities in managing the administrative parts of running the PSP.

The method of processing applications by prospective students is clearly aligned with principles and quality procedures of the University.

The methods and resources for teaching are made clear in the supporting documentation for the design and approval of the PSP. These are also clearly presented in the Programme Handbook available to students.

The handbook that refers to the regulations of study, as well as the programme handbook offer clear details as to the various support functions and systems available to students. They include the role of student academic adviser who is assigned to each student upon registration on the programme. Other such functions are the regulations for addressing and resolving student complaints, based on the University's internal quality procedures.

Rewarding excellence in student performance is another area that is very well designed and offers support and recognition for talented and high performing students. Beyond the recognition of success, the department rewards students financially through a reduction of tuition fees and / or supporting external activities such as the participation in scientific conferences in Greece or at international locations. The PSP team has assigned a generous proportion of the income from tuition fees to offer such support.

The procedures that support the attainment of Level 7 according to National and International Postgraduate study Frameworks relate to the design of the structure of the programme which is based on the laws of the Ministry of Education of the Hellenic Republic. A module descriptor template is used to ensure consistency in the presentation of module details. This consistency is quite high, but there is room for further improvement.

The department and PSP team have provided samples of the degree certificate and academic transcript in accordance with the Law and the quality regulations of the University.

There are clear regulations as to the mode of study, part-time or full-time and the timing for completion in each case.

The student centered approach to teaching that is one of the prevailing principles of the University ensures that the PSP can offer some online attendance to teaching activities to students with busy professional and personal /family lives. Regardless of this, to ensure equity and to safeguard standards any examination based assessments are to be conducted in person for all students.

The programme's design supports industrial internships and / or industrial dissertations, depending on the availability of organizations to offer them. The regulations of student engagement and student supervision arrangements are governed by the University's regulations of study.

II. Analysis

The supporting documentation presented by the department and the PSP team is of high quality and reflects the experience in the department from having designed and run other PSPs since 2007.

The module descriptors can be further improved in terms of consistency by ensuring that they all utilize the appropriate template to provide the same level of detail. This will be particularly beneficial for students if the intended Learning Outcomes are mapped against the various assessment instruments and are also linked to the PSP overall Learning Objectives.

The option for students to follow an industrial placement and / or industrial dissertation is a great asset of the programme. The department appears to have the external connections to develop these opportunities into focal points of developing not just knowledge in specific domains, but also professional, ethical, and employability skills that will enhance the attractiveness of graduates when they enter the job market.

The programme is designed to support students with diverse requirements and commitments and to allow them continue their studies at the level alongside professional and personal/family commitments.

The student centered nature of teaching and running the PSP is compatible with University's strong ethical and pastoral commitment to its student community and reflects an excellent learning environment.

III. **Conclusions**

Overall the PSP is appropriately designed according to the Laws of the country and the quality regulations and procedures of the University.

There are strong elements and procedures for developing a learning community that students can thrive in.

The scientific part of the programme offers options for students to develop their knowledge domains according to their interests and the incentives and trends of the job marketplace, while the industrial opportunities offer options for professional and employability skills.

The PSP supports student inclusivity by offering different elements of flexibility in the mode of attendance to allow students with diverse commitments to be able to study and successfully complete their degree.

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

To support and further expand the opportunities for industrial placements and dissertations for students and to encourage as many of them as possible to engage.

To improve the consistency of module descriptors.

To continue to support inclusivity in student recruitment and support during their studies.

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 programme will be delivered by established academics from the department of Informatics and Telematics of Harokopio University. These are recruited and their performance and professional progression through the academic ranks is controlled according to the laws and regulations of the Ministry of Education of the Hellenic Republic and the University's internal regulations.

All staff that are included in the documentation submitted by the PSP are well established academics with proven teaching and research records and are well esteemed in the academic community. Most of them have extensive experience in delivering postgraduate courses within the department and have been doing so successfully over several years.

The University has a well-established system for supporting the continuous development of academics in staying at the university forefront of their field of knowledge and expertise. Moreover, the department has established an international advisory board composed by top academics around the world offering external perspectives to enhance education quality, research initiatives, and industry partnerships, as well as supporting networking and knowledge exchange opportunities for faculty and students. Finally, the PSP proposes Teaching Excellence Awards as a recognition of best teaching practices.

II. Analysis

The PSP has assembled a competent and experienced team of highly ranked academics that inspire confidence in delivering the programme well, covering adequately all aspects of courses taught

in the three specializations of the proposed PSP. Moreover, the existence of an international advisory board offering advice on emerging fields and trends further enhances the competences of the programme team and ensures that students will be offered the best possible academic and professional teaching. One area which will probably need to be reinforced in terms of teaching staff is that of machine learning.

III. **Conclusions**

Overall, the department has put together a well selected team of established and accredited academics from its resources to deliver the proposed PSP. One area which will probably need to be reinforced in terms of teaching staff is that of machine learning.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Consider reinforcing the area of machine learning during future recruitments of academics.

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 is very well equipped with laboratories and infrastructures. The new program is an evolution of the Master's program in "Informatics and Telematics," which has been the Department's main postgraduate program since 2012, giving an added value in the experience of the faculty for the implementation of the new PSP. Hence, the laboratories already have the necessary equipment for advanced research. In the Feasibility and Sustainability Study it is foreseen that part of the **tuition can be invested** for new equipment necessary for specific research needs.

According to the testimonies of the staff and based on experience of the existing master course of the Department, the secretariat and the professors are providing support to the students from the beginning until after the completion of the studies.

The professors are well experienced with proven research work and it seems to have built-up a team work spirit. New researchers and external professors with relative expertise are participating in the PSP as well. The administrative staff – Secretariat- also consists of highly skilled professionals with postgraduate studies.

Students are being informed of the available services upon registration through a leaflet, where all necessary information is included. Furthermore, a counselor professor (study advisor) is assigned to them at the beginning of the studies. There are several support Services and Centers in the University, as described in the next section.

There is a utilization plan of tuition fees, based on the maximum amount of annual student entries, which also secures that a part of the funds is returned to the students for their penetration into the international scientific world (conferences, publications etc.), for scholarships, for upgrading the equipment and other future necessary improvements of the PSP.

II. Analysis

- *Description of the infrastructure and to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.)*

The proposed programme is directly related to the subject matter of the Department's first cycle of studies and constitutes its natural continuation. Furthermore, it has been described as the evolution of the Master's program in "Informatics and Telematics" of the same Department. Hence, the necessary classrooms and laboratory facilities to support both the teaching and research activities of the program already exist: amphitheater, multimedia equipment, computer labs with over 70 workstations in total and high-speed internet access. A dedicated space has been set up for the installation of educational and specialized research equipment related to artificial intelligence (GPU-intensive servers). Additionally, a part of the tuition is dedicated to equipment and software expenses, in order to maintain the equipment up -to- date and to meet the research's future needs.

The teaching staff of the PSP consists of experienced professors with proven research work, members of the teaching staff of the Department of Informatics and Telematics, as well as other Departments. Furthermore, external instructors are also appointed, based on their field of expertise, assuring the connectivity of the PSP with the current workplace and scientific interests. A team of younger researchers and experienced professors appeared in the interview, who seemed to have proven strong communication and teaching skills, being able to create fruitful relationships and effective collaborations with the students. The small number of students in each Direction (max 15) enables the student- based learning.

- *Administrative support staff of the PSP (job descriptions, qualifications, and responsibilities)*

The administrative staff – Secretariat- consists of highly skilled professionals with postgraduate studies. According to the interview, the administrative staff is supportive and effective with their responsibilities. The staff targets to create a friendly environment with the students. The Secretariat provides the students with all the information needed for the practical issues and the procedures. In order to avoid the delay of the competition of the PSP (for example, due to extra workload

since usually graduate students are working in parallel), the secretariat follows their progress and stays in contact, when necessary, in order to track and communicate any important challenge/delay. This targets to resolve the issue by offering alternatives, like for instance, the possibility to shift to the part-time program. All the administrative staff seem to be present for the support of the students and the enhancement of problem solving.

A counselor professor is appointed as a Study Advisor to each student upon registration and- again, according to the experience from the existing courses - the role is working effectively.

- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*

The PSP provides students with the necessary support during their studies and even some time after this. There is a leaflet which is given to the students upon registration with all the useful information. The PSP is new, but according to the experience from the other master course of the University, post-graduate students are participating in Development Clubs and Student Groups.

The university is quite small and it is easy to get friendly involvement with the students and staff. Each Direction of the PSP is going to have approximately 15 students, which also enhances friendly and personalized relationships.

The dedicated offices of the Student Advocate and the Advisor for Students with Special Educational Needs are guaranteeing that students, including those with special educational needs, receive tailored assistance, fostering an inclusive and supportive academic environment. There is a Library and Information Center (L.I.C.) providing access to scientific resources and information, while it offers user training seminars to the students, remote services and other facilities.

The Student Service Center (S.S.C.). ensures students are well-informed about various aspects of university life, aiming at providing an environment that empowers students with knowledge and assistance. The services provided are: Information Hub, Electronic and In-Person Assistance, Student Care Services, Study and Career Liaison Office, which among others, support students with seminars on soft skills, job postings and other Events.

In the University there is also a Foreign Language Teaching Center (F.L.T.C.) and the option for Student Mobility. The university supports Erasmus mobility, however usually it is not very popular for postgraduate students, since often they are already working and have obligations that keep them in the city.

Other services provided in the University which enhance the internalization and the creativity of the students is the participation in code competitions, such as hackathons. The Department has established an International Advisory Committee, which supports the organizational and academic development of the Department and strengthens its international collaborations with the goal of fostering synergies. This creates a network in the international research community which is open to the students who are interested in the internationalization of their work and research. The department works with EU projects and involves students to international research activities, in some cases paid.

There is a Union of Alumni for all the graduates of the University. The faculty keeps track of the graduates for some time after their graduation, in order to get data for surveys on employment absorption and job satisfaction. It seems that the faculty

has achieved personal contacts with the graduates for some time after the studies and to create a relationship that provides data and info on the evolution and absorption of the graduates.

The Department offers the students the option to get involved in the research industry, either for Internship or for the implementation of their thesis. Private and public sector companies are willing to take students for the implementation of their research/ thesis or for an internship, according to their previous experience with students from the other courses of the Department (both graduate and postgraduate). It seems that the faculty has developed strong liaisons with companies of the public and private sector which appreciate the work done with the students and the provided educational level, and are willing to exploit the student-force, keeping an open possibility the shifting from internship to permanent positions.

It was clarified that most of the students who will be accepted to the course have the necessary knowledge to effectively attend the courses or are willing to attend extra courses to upskill and update their knowledge, if necessary.

Students are given the opportunity to evaluate the courses and instructors at the end of the semester and at the end of the program through questionnaires/ surveys. Based on the experience from the existing master course, almost all post-graduate students participate in the evaluation procedure.

- *Tuition utilization plan*

Professors are encouraging students to participate in conferences, competitions, EU projects, to publish their research work to scientific magazines etc. There is a tuition utilization plan which supports these activities. Furthermore, besides the necessary costs, salaries and expenses, the tuition supports mobility of the professors and students for educational reasons, updating equipment and OS as well as scholarships for the best students even after the first semester.

III. Conclusions

The PSP provides sufficient resources and means, since it is described as the natural continuation of the graduate and Master course with existing infrastructures and equipment. It is foreseen to continue to provide and upgrade educational and scientific equipment using part of the tuition fees.

The PSP appears to be able to provide support and counseling services, according to the experience of the Department and the already existing services in Centers, Committees, Offices etc., and contribution of well-experienced staff.

The available resources are able to meet the needs of all students (full-time or part-time students, employed and with disabilities). The relatively small University and small number of students in each Direction of the PSP secures the student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. The PSP provides support activities and facilities which are known to the students since their registration and continuously through the Secretariat and the Study Advisor. Students are given the opportunity to participate in the international research community (conferences, papers, EU projects, competitions, hackathons, mobility etc) and to integrate with the national labor- market through internships and/or implementation of thesis and research in public or private sector companies. Students participate in internal quality assurance procedures through the evaluation of the course.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should utilize their good liaisons in the international and national research and work community to enable them to provide students with support during their studies/ research and for their beginning or continuation of their careers.

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 PSP was designed based on input provided by various sources, most importantly by faculty members in their field of research, international agencies, Greek organizations and corporate unions related to ICT, data collected from graduate employment studies and experiences and student feedback from other PSPs of the Department and the University.

The University has established procedures for monitoring the design and delivery of every aspect of the programme, such as course teaching, assessment, evaluation of the processes by

The internal quality assurance teams of the department of Informatics and Telematics, as well as those of the proposed PSP are aligned with those of the University.

The documentation submitted by the PSP team has offered all details about the procedures that will be supporting the monitoring and controlling of the level of quality of the programme delivery and that of student satisfaction and success.

Quality processes are available to monitor student progress, levels of satisfaction for the programme overall and that of individual modules and relevant teaching staff, and the resources available to support their studies, such as library and laboratory equipment and teaching spaces. The functioning and results of all quality assurance procedures are published on the website of the department (dit.hua.gr), which is well-designed with a well-structured information presentation. The department of Informatics and Telematics benefits from the relationships of its faculty members with key industrial and government actors who bring their expertise in the skills requirements that the job market will expect from graduates of the new PSP.

II. Analysis

The relationships of the department with key industrial and government actors definitely contribute to enhancing the quality of the PSP in providing strategic guidance, fostering collaborations, and aligning education with industry trends to enhance student employability and innovation. Additional benefits can be obtained by keeping links with the future graduates of the proposed PSP. Institutionalizing these two important sources of feedback and collaboration could be of great benefit to the PSP as well as to the department.

III. Conclusions

The programme benefits from appropriate systems and processes that will guarantee every aspect of quality to ensure that the delivery and outcomes are of a standard expected of a programme of studies at this level. However, beyond the academic standards the programme could greatly benefit by institutionalizing an industrial advisory board and encouraging the creation of an association of its proper alumni.

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

Formally establish an industrial advisory board, encourage the creation of an association of its own alumni, and link the two bodies to work together in supporting the perpetual development of the programme.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

Teaching staff embed experiences from state-of-the-art research and examples of industrial experiences through consultancy into their teaching, enhancing student experience and knowledge.

The structure of the programme is such that the optional modules available allow students to explore knowledge domains that are linked to the other pathways of study, beyond that of their specialization. This allows them to broaden their knowledge horizon and their ability to engage with more integrated projects.

The department has developed strong links with the professional bodies and industrial and research organizations in Greece and beyond.

The planning of utilization of tuition fees income demonstrates a willingness to invest into activities and resources that will enhance student learning and experiences.

The design and desire of the PSP team to offer students industry-based dissertations offers great opportunities for development of practical application knowledge of their theoretical learning and enhancing their professional and employability skills.

The programme offers flexibility of completing studies full time or part time and thus caters for students personal and professional situations, allowing the PSP to attract talented people that otherwise might have been excluded from studying on the programme.

Flexibility in the mode of attendance (with some attendance online allowed) will support professionals who need to travel for work purposes, or parents of young children, or students that might be caring for elderly relatives at home.

The University operates a Graduate tracing policy every two years and this will benefit the future development of this PSP as it will allow it to evaluate the outcome of their teaching and development of graduates from their professional destinations and careers.

II. Areas of Weakness

The all-inclusive title of the PSP might appear misleading and may dissuade prospective students. This might lead the PSP to miss on some very talented students who could benefit from the programme in their professional development.

The PSP is technology oriented, potentially fitting under almost any Greek higher education establishment. HUA relevant IT applications (i.e. GIS, smart home, health) are missing, diffusing rather than strengthening the identity and the competitive advantage of its host institution.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Establish a formal advisory board including national and international industrial partners and aim to involve past graduates to it to ensure continuous feedback and influx of fresh ideas.

Establish a PSP specific alumni association. Invite them to engage with students in organizing activities, engage in industrial and / or research projects with students, and publish the outcomes of their work together.

Promote and motivate students to go on industrial placements and to engage with industrial based dissertations.

Consider whether the team requires reinforcing in the area of Machine Learning during future recruitment of academics.

The department and the PSP should consider revising its research strategy towards a distinct HUA identity and, consequently, focus on applications that complement and strengthen the HUA's overall offering.

Teaching staff pays more attention to producing course contents which share the same format, structure, and methodology in their description. For example, there are clear instructions in modern teaching theory about how learning outcomes should be defined (active verbs focusing on what the student will achieve by the end of the module). Assessment methods should also be more clearly described. The teaching staff could assign one member to oversee this process and homogenize the course contents description towards modern standards who can help the students appreciate what is offered.

Teaching feedback is organized twice in the duration of the course. The first is organized half-way, which would allow the lecturer to comment on the feedback and announce actions to tackle identified problems in its delivery. The second is delivered at the end as it is now. Publicizing the results should be accompanied with comments by the lecturer. Moreover, it would also be useful for the students if the lecturer published some comments/feedback on the results of the assessment for each module.

The Department appears to have good liaisons in the international and national research and work community which enables it to provide students with support during their studies/ research and for their beginning or continuation of their careers.

Extended to six months industrial internships or dissertations - to be formally included in the PSP studies guide.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 2,3,4,5,6

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 1

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	