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HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report

for the Postgraduate Study Programme of: European Societies and European Integration

Department: Sociology

Institution: University of the Aegean

Date: 07/01/2025



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 Postgraduate Study Programme of **European Societies and European Integration** of the **University of the Aegean** 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 postgraduate study programme of European Societies and European Integration of the **University of the Aegean** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. Apostolis Papakostas** (Chair)
Södertörn University

2. **Prof. Anastasia Karakasidou**
Wellesley College

3. **Prof. Ulrich Moennig**
Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie, Fachbereich Sprache, Literatur,
Medien II, Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften, Universität Hamburg

4. **Prof. Adele Scafuro**
Brown University

5. **Mr Rapsomatiotis Aristeidis**
University of the Peloponnese

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Postgraduate Study Programme of “EUROPEAN SOCIETIES AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION” of the School of Social Sciences of the University of the Aegean, was reviewed by the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel, which was comprised by five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020.

The content of the Panel, as described in the Guidelines for the Members of EEAP, was:

- to establish whether the data provided from the various resources is consistent among one another and reflect the actual situation.
- identify strengths and areas of weakness.
- engage in a constructive dialogue with the Institution, leading to reflection and continuous enhancement of the study programme.

Following a well-prepared schedule provided by HAHE, the Panel held several separate interactive virtual (by electronic means, ZOOM) meetings and visits for two days as follows:

On Monday, 09/12/2024, the following virtual meetings took place:

- with the Head of the School
- the Head of the hosting Department
- with the Director of the Programme
- with MODIP members and staff, and Steering Committees/OMEA members
- an online tour of virtual classrooms, online platforms, and other facilities related to the Programme. The online tour was followed by a discussion about the facilities in which teaching and administrative staff participated.

• On Wednesday, 11/12/2024, the following virtual meetings took place:

- with teaching staff of the Programme
- with students and alumni of the Programme
- with employers and social partners of the private and public sector
- meeting with the President of MODIP, the Head of the School, the Director of the Programme, members and staff of MODIP, and members of Steering Committees/OMEA members.

During the virtual meetings mentioned above, the Panel had the opportunity to meet, talk, and interact with all the participants of all meetings, who were encouraged to express their views and talk freely about their overall teaching and learning experience. All the participants welcomed the opportunity to talk to the Panel and to voice their views. The discussions were

very constructive and fruitful and were conducted in a cooperative manner and attitude. All the meetings included presentations, discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. During the last meeting the Panel made an informal presentation of some initial key findings.

The internal evaluation report and other extensive material were made available to the Panel electronically in advance through HAHE. More information and materials were made available during the meetings.

The Department worked diligently in preparing the internal evaluation report and other relevant materials and organizing and hosting the virtual meetings. It is the feeling of the Panel that the Department has performed an excellent job throughout the internal evaluation process and that the objectives of the process have been fully met. The efficiency and eagerness of the Department to answer questions and provide additional information and clarifications during the meetings are worth noting. The Panel wishes to express gratitude and appreciation to the Department and the University administration for their co- operation and professionalism.

This Accreditation Report is based on information collected and views expressed during the virtual meetings and on information contained in the internal evaluation report and other documents submitted before and during the virtual meetings.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The Postgraduate Study Programme “EUROPEAN SOCIETIES AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION” started in 2008 and was revised in 2018 and 2023. The Postgraduate Studies Program lasts 3 semesters. European studies and European integration have been central to the research profile of the Department of Sociology in nearly two decades.

Specifically, the Postgraduate Programme aims to:

- explore the relationship and the tensions between social-cultural practices of civil societies and formal democratic institutions both in Europe and in adjacent Mediterranean countries on Europe’s southern and eastern peripheries in terms of national identities, social movements, democratization processes, political representation, religion and modernization.
- explore the European and Euro-Mediterranean social constellations as dynamic processes, and especially to bring together students, lecturers and researchers from neighbouring countries to explore the aforementioned factors that shape our future and to suggest possible routes to inter-cultural understanding and institutional integration.
- encourage students to become involved in original research based on primary or secondary data analysis, leading to publication of their research in international journals.

Since 2019, the Programme's courses are taught entirely remotely.

During the first two semesters the Programme is structured in eight courses, compulsory for all students. A mandatory thesis (30 ECTS) will be authored and defended during the third semester.

The fee for the whole Programme is 3 500 Euros. For the academic year 2024-25 and 41 students were enrolled.

The Programme is well situated and integrated in the international field of European Studies, and it is supported by academic staff from the Department and other universities in Greece and abroad. All teaching staff are Ph.D. holders who are active scholars and researchers in diverse areas of European studies, sociology, European Law, and other related disciplines.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND QUALITY GOAL SETTING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit should be in line with the quality assurance policy of the Institution 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 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 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 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 the 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 review and audit of the quality assurance system of the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Documentation

- *Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP*
- *Quality goal setting of the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit is formulated as a public statement, and it is available electronically via an accessible website. It corresponds to the Policy of the institution, and it is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of specific goals that relate to attracting, hiring and keeping high quality research-active teaching staff, producing excellent research and delivering excellent teaching. A focal point of the objectives is the continuous development of the programme in directions that will endow post-graduate

students with the appropriate that the fast-changing labour market requires. Connecting research, teaching and employability is a central objective the PSP's Quality Assurance Policy.

The QAP has been approved by the Assembly of the Department and aims to develop and improve the Programme in line with the overall Quality Assurance Policy of the University of the Aegean. The quality assurance procedures of the Programme are coordinated and carried out under the supervision of the Department's Internal Evaluation Team.

II. Analysis

The pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications was found to be in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education at level 7.

Teaching staff was found to be appropriately qualified and active in research, and the curriculum that is delivered follows current developments in the field.

The QAP is evaluated internally and students participate in this process by regularly completing relevant questionnaires. The results of the questionnaires are properly analysed and results are taken into consideration.

III. Conclusions

There is a solid Quality Assurance Policy in place, with appropriate, quality goals and in line with the QAP of the institution as a whole. The PSP teaching team is fully compliant, and there is a strong positive evaluation culture that facilitates the realisation of the Programme's goals and sets the framework for achieving them. Connections with the local community and the larger European community are exemplary. Financial resources appear to be effectively allocated, although a part could be diverted towards a staff research budget that would allow staff members to enjoy greater research mobility (participation in conferences and important events), as well as scholarship to students of need. All teaching staff are properly qualified, active in research and practice, while their teaching is research-led.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Quality assurance policy and quality goal setting for the postgraduate study programmes of the institution

| and the academic unit | |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

None

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF 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 POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 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, and specialisations 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. For each 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 of 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 EQF, 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 (name list including of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship, and teaching assignment in hours as well as other teaching commitments in hours)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

This program started in 2008, and is the oldest and more ‘tested’ of the three under review. It was re-established in 2018 and they made more changes in the curriculum in 2024. It started as a regular in-class program, which some students found very difficult since they had to be present in the island and balance work and family obligations. But since the pandemic, it became completely remote and the language of instruction is English. Their original goal was to address how much the national matters in European integration. How do different nations, with their distinct societies and cultures, come to form the European Union? What are the national vs. European responses and policies towards migration? The committee found that the program is very interdisciplinary, both in teaching and student background. It appeared to be very popular, because it reaches out to all sorts of students interested in European integration, especially as it pertains to public policy and education. Students had a variety of previous experiences and academic training, such as Turkish Studies, Public Policy, French literature, International European Studies, European Studies, and Byzantine History They come from these diverse backgrounds and some already work for European Universities, Greek government institutions, and NGO’s (FRONTEX, MSF, police, etc.). The program is well advertised, both formally and through word-of-mouth. After sixteen years of successful performance, they now receive 120 applications, three times more the number of positions they can offer, a ratio that makes it very competitive.

II. Analysis

Since 2008, the Program offers both theoretical and practical knowledge about European integration. The academic profile is quite impressive and offers courses in diverse themes, such as justice, migration policies, racism, colonialities, crime and punishment, border sociology and criminology, trafficking and exploitation. According to the students, however, the highlight of the Program is that their classes were not just boring lectures by Greek and international scholars and experts: they were run more like seminars, where students asked questions and participated in lively discussions. They seemed to be thirsty to express their views and discuss readings and political happenings. Students despite the remoteness of teaching, feel like they had formed a community, and through social media become friends and continue to exchange ideas. Some can afford to attend the Oinoues summer school, but the majority of them express their need to come together in the island, and meet their professors and fellow students in person.

III. Conclusions

The degree of compliance to the standards of Quality Accreditation is excellent as it pertains to the design and approval of the program. The Program members appear to have gone through a number of internal and external evaluations. They revised the Program as new European problems and crises arose, especially since migration became the greatest threat to the already vulnerable “European fortress.” Therefore, the committee finds that the Program both sets and accomplishes its high goals. The small number of students withdrawing from the program (mostly for personal reasons) is an excellent indication of the Program’s success over the years. The current status, and strengths of the Program are undeniably very good. The only possible area of concern, and what appears to be in need, is a more critical approach to European matters. European integration can be both ‘good and bad’ in political and socio-cultural matters. The committee heard very positive remarks from the students, who praised Europe, and felt European. They did not, however, voice any questions about the racism that plagues the European ideal, as well as socio-economic and gender inequalities. In addition, the committee would like to recommend more hirings, especially female professors, to both balance the gender ratio of the teaching staff and to unburden the department’s professors who appear to have a very heavy teaching load.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 2: Design and approval of postgraduate study programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

A methodology course should be included in the curriculum, where critical aspects of the European integration project could be discuss

PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation, their self-evaluation, and their active participation in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs by adopting flexible learning paths*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys*
- *strengthens the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with the students' complaints*
- *provides counselling and guidance for the preparation of the thesis*

In addition

- *The academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The assessment criteria and methods are published in advance. The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and conducted in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *The function of the academic advisor runs smoothly.*

Documentation

- *Sample of a fully completed questionnaire for the evaluation of the PSP by the students*
- *Regulations for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of academic advisor*
- *Reference to the teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP embodies a firmly student-centered approach in both its design and implementation, with remote learning thoughtfully integrated to accommodate diverse needs. Building on a robust technological infrastructure, all course materials—books, slides, and notes—are updated regularly and made accessible via the University's open eClass platform. This arrangement fosters flexible learning paths and allows students to engage with content at their own pace, while

maintaining active interaction through discussion forums, email, and video conferencing.

Teaching methodologies reflect an interactive philosophy. Professors initiate classes with concise presentations that transition seamlessly into guided discussions and case studies, prompting students to deepen their critical thinking. An interdisciplinary mix of both faculty and student backgrounds enriches classroom dynamics, and enhances the overall learning outcomes. Students benefit from targeted support early on, with additional opportunities for collaboration during on-campus seminars in Mytilene, which facilitate peer bonding and provide reinforcement for any gaps in comprehending the material.

Assessment methods and criteria are clearly communicated. By combining interim progress reviews, final evaluations, and feedback loops, the Programme ensures students receive timely guidance to refine their work and maintain a steady successful academic trajectory. Students also have opportunities to participate in joint publications and may be mentored toward doctoral studies. This is a significant indicator of the Programme's commitment to fostering independence and scholarly growth.

The institution's internal quality assurance mechanisms reinforce this student-centered ethos. End-of-semester evaluations gather systematic feedback on teaching methods and resources, which are then reviewed and used to enhance the Programme on an ongoing basis. The smooth operation of academic advising, together with responsive administrative and library services, completes a comprehensive support system.

Overall, the PSP Programme successfully cultivates a rich learning environment that actively promotes student engagement and achievement. Its robust distance-learning framework, interactive teaching methods, transparent assessment practices, and strong student support collectively demonstrate ****full compliance**** with Principle 3.

II. Analysis

The PSP programme exemplifies a thoroughly student-centered approach, effectively leveraging remote learning to meet diverse academic and professional needs. All learning materials—books, slides, and notes—are systematically updated and easily accessible via the University's eClass platform, enabling flexible study schedules and maintaining continuous interaction through forums,

email, and virtual sessions.

Central to the programme’s philosophy is active learning, facilitated by concise faculty presentations that swiftly evolve into discussions, case studies, and real data analyses. This interactive methodology is reinforced by an interdisciplinary mix of students and staff, fostering vibrant exchanges of ideas. For those less familiar with European or sociological issues, initial support and guidance help bridge knowledge gaps, ensuring all learners can engage meaningfully with the curriculum.

Administrative and academic support systems—including prompt guidance from advisors and user-friendly library services—provide a cohesive framework for student success. The seamless integration of distance learning, interactive teaching, fair assessment, and responsive academic support solidifies the programme’s alignment with student-centered principles, demonstrating ****full compliance**** with Principle 3.

III. **Conclusions**

Taking into account the strengths and the minor improvement area, the PSP is Fully ****Compliant**** with Principle 3. The core elements of student-centred methodology, assessment fairness, and continuous improvement are firmly in place, with a dedicated teaching and support team ensuring a positive learning environment for the diverse student body.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

- Enhance existing orientation sessions and preliminary reading materials to better equip students, especially those lacking a robust background in European or sociological studies, to understand and engage with core concepts from the outset.
- Continue refining interim progress assessments and diversify feedback opportunities to further empower students’ self-reflection and academic development.
- Keep emphasizing student feedback mechanisms, ensuring that the programme remains flexible and responsive to evolving academic and professional needs.

PRINCIPLE 4: 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).

All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:

- *the student 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*

All the above must be made public in the context of the Student Guide.

Documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the Postgraduate Study Programme*
- *Research Ethics Regulation*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Degree certificate template*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department of Sociology at the University of the Aegean has created and published a comprehensive set of regulations that address all facets and stages of the study process. The documentation submitted to the EEAP includes: 1) the regulations of the PSP, which outline the rules for admission and the tracking of students' progress; 2) the Research Ethics Regulation; 3) the guidelines related to internship matters; 4) the regulations regarding student mobility (including recognition/ECTS); 5) the rules for preparing assignments and theses; 6) the guidelines for remote teaching; and 7) a sample of the diploma and the diploma supplement. All of these regulations are readily available on the institution's website, making them accessible to students. They have confirmed that all aspects of their educational experience, from admission to diploma awarding, are communicated to them in a very transparent way. The EEAP noticed a high level of student satisfaction.

II. Analysis

The institution has put in place clearly outlined regulations that are thoroughly documented and effectively communicated to all relevant stakeholders. To assist new incoming students, the Director and the teaching staff as well as the administration staff and the IT coordinator of the program organize welcome and informational events. Students receive excellent support throughout their studies, from admission to the program to the awarding of their degree. The EEAP concludes that all facets of student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies, and certification are entirely transparent and suitable.

III. Conclusions

All aspects of the circle of studies, from start to finish, are governed by the Department's internal policies. These relevant regulations are publicly available in the Student Guide and various additional documents. All documents are published on the Department's website.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 4: Student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies and certification | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

None

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF 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 of the teaching staff of the academic unit teaching at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the appropriate staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training- development, 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*
- *Employment regulations or contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff support and development*
- *Individual performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g. Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*
- *List of teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin, Department of origin*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Teaching staff are adequate, and the professor-student ratio is satisfactory. Teaching staff is appropriately trained, and their research specialisations match the programme of study. The recruitment process appears to be fair, objective and transparent, in accordance with national standards and following national regulations.

All staff are active in research and (despite the lack of funds) strive to remain mobile, attend conferences and connect with other departments in Europe. There are stable research leave (sabbatical) arrangements and generally-speaking, the External Evaluation Committee found that career development is not hindered in

any way by structural factors, or implicit academic hierarchies.

II. Analysis

All staff are highly specialised and produce significant research. Scholarly activity is encouraged at staff level and research outputs are significant and closely linked to what is taught at the programme level. There are no irregularities in how staff are hired or in their career development.

The department, however, lacks a stable and structured seminar series that would bring together academics, postgraduate research and taught students as well as external speakers (either from other universities in the country, or from abroad). As a result, the research culture of the department is not as developed as one would expect and there is the need to create spaces for dialogue, presentation of research and critical debate. Such spaces have also a 'mentoring' character and they can become contexts for productive peer-review and advancement of knowledge in the field.

The department, as a whole, has a positive reputation. It can and it does attract highly qualified academic staff who are familiar with new technologies in research and teaching. Funded and unfunded research conducted is published in international publishing houses (such as Routledge) and staff maintain productive research links with colleagues at national and European levels.

III. Conclusions

The External Evaluation Committee found that hiring and development processes are transparent, adequate and follow national regulations. Staff are aware of how to develop their career; they are appropriately trained and conduct research that closely matches the subjects taught on the PSP. Nevertheless, the departmental research culture can be strengthened with the introduction of research spaces, peer-review and mentoring practices. The department does not seem to hinder professional development, but we are not sure that it facilitates adequately the production of scholarly activity and the exchange of research knowledge between all strata of the academic community (including research and taught postgraduate students).

Panel Judgement

| Principle 5: Teaching staff of postgraduate study programmes | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

The development of a stable seminar series (weekly or fortnightly) with the participation of academic staff, research and taught postgraduate students.

The development of a 'local' annual conference where staff, research students and postgraduate taught students will be able to present their work, discuss and offer peer- review comments in a constructive manner. This will familiarise both PSP and research students with the format of presenting original research in appropriate fora.

The development of mentorship structures that could facilitate professional development, sharing resources and networking, the exchange of ideas and good practice.

PRINICPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. 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, 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 students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred 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 of the Aegean offers an array of resources to support the academic and administrative needs of its Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP). Although the institution boasts physical amenities—such as classrooms, amphitheatres, laboratories, and a library—the PSP itself is predominantly taught through distance learning. Consequently, students and faculty primarily rely on digital platforms for live sessions and asynchronous coursework. In particular, Zoom is employed for lectures, whereas the *openclass eClass* platform serves as a

central repository for course materials, announcements, and interactive forums.

Alongside these digital solutions, the University's library system grants comprehensive access to both hard-copy and electronic collections. Learners can consult databases and digital libraries via the University's VPN or by visiting the library in person. Moreover, the library arranges interlibrary borrowing for students who wish to acquire materials from libraries nearer to their own locations. These efforts reflect the University's commitment to ensuring resource accessibility.

Financially, the PSP appears well-supported, indicating the University's capability to maintain the necessary academic and technological infrastructure. Meanwhile, the departmental secretariat, comprising three staff members—including one designated specifically for postgraduate programmes—effectively manages admissions, handles student inquiries, and supervises the routine operations of the PSP.

II. Analysis

From an overarching perspective, the University demonstrates a robust provision of physical and digital resources, aligning squarely with the standards set out by Principle 6. While this PSP functions primarily online, the University's broader physical infrastructure can readily accommodate any optional in-person components, such as workshops or on-site seminars. Importantly, distance learners benefit from a dependable online environment, underscored by the consistent use of Zoom for synchronous sessions and the *openclass eClass* platform for comprehensive course management.

A standout strength emerges from the University's library services. The option for VPN-based remote access, coupled with interlibrary loan arrangements, ensures that students are not disadvantaged by distance. Additionally, the availability of dedicated IT assistance, proficient administrative personnel, and clear communication pathways signals the University's commitment to fostering student success.

Given the PSP's reliance on digital modes of instruction, it remains prudent to continue evaluating the effectiveness of these platforms, as well as providing regular professional development for the secretariat and administrative support teams. By periodically reviewing Zoom's functionalities, the eClass platform, and library resources, the institution can ensure that technology remains relevant, intuitive, and suitably responsive to student needs.

III. Conclusions

In conclusion, the PSP fully satisfies the requirements of Principle 6. Sufficient funding, robust technological systems, extensive library support, and a focused administrative structure collectively equip students to navigate and excel within the programme from any location. The University has established clear pathways to both virtual and physical resources, reinforced by accessible support services

coordinated by the secretariat. Overall, these components illustrate a highly effective approach to managing learning resources in a distance education context.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 6: Learning resources and student support | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

- Ensure remote students are regularly and explicitly informed of all available services, including library resources, interlibrary loan processes, and specialized support or career counselling.
- Continue to periodically assess and refine the functionalities of Zoom and *openclass eClass*, guaranteeing that both platforms remain user-friendly and that course materials are consistently updated to meet evolving academic standards.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and decision-making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on postgraduate study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information collected depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success, and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programmes*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*

A number of methods may be used to collect information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Documentation

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department, and the PSP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the PSP (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Data are collected regarding the members of the teaching staff (e.g., the calculation of annual teaching hours), including their research and published work, as well as their administrative responsibilities. In the area of research, data encompass publications in high-quality scientific journals, participation in research projects, receipt of awards, and tracking citations. Data related to the curriculum include posting course content, recommended literature, supporting materials, and examination methods on the department's online teaching platform. Procedures aimed at assessing the quality of teaching involve student questionnaires, processing attendance and success statistics for offered courses,

and analyzing grades for each course and semester using platforms such as Universis/Uniteacher at the University of the Aegean. Questionnaires are distributed in printed format, and there are also digital forms that can be completed online. Information analysis employs descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results are communicated to the teaching staff and the Department Chair, who are informed about course evaluations and grade distributions. The European and national legislation relevant to the protection of personal data is included in the curriculum of the course "European Public Law." Furthermore, the documentation presented to the EEAP comprises: 1) Data from 2015 to 2023, collected through the NISQA and presented annually by the Academic Unit (via IQAS and with substantial support from the QAU), which includes details on staff, financial information, infrastructure, research activities, student demographics, student mobility, and internationalisation; 2) Information about the Universis systems; and 3) Details regarding the Open eClass platform. Additionally, the EEAP has received data on student progression, success rates, and drop-out rates. Both students and staff play a role in supplying and analysing this information, as well as in follow-up activities. The Academic Unit makes use of platforms provided by the University of the Aegean and national institutions such as the HaHe and the Ministry of Education.

II. Analysis

The Academic Unit has established an efficient information management system through both internal structures (at the departmental and university levels) and in cooperation with external institutional partners. All information is anonymised to protect personal data.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is fully compliant with the accreditation criteria.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 7: Information management | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

None

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN A DIRECT AND READILY ACCESSIBLE WAY. THE RELEVANT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, OBJECTIVE AND CLEAR.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public.

Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the PSP they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures applied, the pass rates, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided on the employment perspectives of PSP graduates.

Documentation

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the PSP*
- *Bilingual version of the PSP website with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP publishes its educational and academic activities on the openly accessible website of the Department (and partly on the university's website), as well as in print. This includes: a) the offered curriculum and the corresponding degree, including regulations for operation and student admissions; b) the teaching and examination program of the PSP; c) information about teaching and administrative staff, including office hours; d) research activities of collaborating laboratories and the Jean Monnet Chair; e) additional learning opportunities, such as student research visits; f) career prospects for graduates; g) student mobility opportunities; h) direct access to the institution's library via an online database; i) scholarship opportunities for students; j) opportunities for student participation in research programs; k) organisation and conduct of conferences, seminars, graduation ceremonies, and other events; l) achievements of students, faculty members, and alumni in academic, professional, and social fields. All essential information additionally is provided in English language.

II. Analysis

Information published on the website of the Department and the PSP is very rich and detailed. Information is up-to-date, objective and clear. However, the structure of the departmental website is confusing; one can enter from the university's website, but from the departmental website, one cannot return to the university's homepage.

III. Conclusions

The PSP is fully compliant with the accreditation criteria.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 8: Public information concerning the postgraduate study programmes | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

The structure of the website needs to be fixed. A pathway should be established to allow navigation from the Department's website to the main site of the university.

PRINCIPLE 9: ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC INTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The regular monitoring, review, and revision of postgraduate study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date*
- b) the changing needs of society*
- c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies*
- d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students*
- e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Documentation

- *Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the PSP curriculum*
- *Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the PSP and the learning process*
- *Feedback processes concerning the strategy and quality goal setting of the PSP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*
- *Results of the annual internal evaluation of the PSP by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), and the relevant minutes*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Since this is an old and well-tested MA program, it comes as no surprise that the degree of its success is due to constant and on-going monitoring and internal evaluations. The Program provided the internal evaluation reports and other relevant material to help the External Committee further evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. Based on the extensive materials submitted and the lengthy information gathered during the online presentations and discussions, it appears that all the professors were eager to participate in this external review in order to fully comply with quality assurance principles. They showed eagerness and

dedication to improve this already competitive program, and strive to make it even better. Reaching excellence is their aspiration and they appear to be reaching this goal. They engaged with us in a constructive dialogue and discussed problem-solving ideas in order to enhance the Program. Without arrogance, they were open to suggestions, answered all relevant questions, and facilitated this much needed external review.

II. Analysis

The Program's internal evaluations were very impressive and the objectives of the process have been attained. Their assessment methods and criteria for self-evaluation are clearly stated and included interim progress reviews, along with final evaluations and feedback considerations. In addition, the Program is committed in fostering student academic growth, while encouraging their independence in theoretical thinking and individual research. Every semester, they gather student evaluations and take their feedback very seriously. They revise their teaching methods, course requirements and the program-at-large. They follow transparent procedures aiming at assessing the quality of teaching and include student questionnaires, success statistics for offered courses, and analyze grades for each course. These questionnaires are distributed both in print and digital format, and the analysis of the information is both quantitative and qualitative. The results are communicated to all Professors who show willingness to improve and excel.

III. Conclusions

The degree of compliance to the standards of Quality Accreditation is excellent as it pertains to the on-going monitoring and internal evaluation of the Program. The current status, is excellent, the Program's strengths are recognizably superior and there are no possible areas of concern as it pertains to internal evaluations and monitoring. It shows that the program evaluates and adjusts according to political happenings in Greece and Europe and respect self-evaluations, student feedback, and compliance to high standards.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going monitoring and periodic internal evaluation of postgraduate study programmes

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

None

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY PANELS OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the PSP accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by panels of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports delivered by the panels of external experts, with a specific term of validity, following to which, revision is required. The quality accreditation of the PSP acts as a means for the determination of the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and Institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Documentation

- *Progress report of the PSP in question, on the results from the utilisation of possible recommendations included in the External Evaluation Report of the Institution, and in the IQAS Accreditation Report, with relation to the postgraduate study programmes*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

This Programme has not been externally evaluated in the past. During the current external review, all stakeholders were actively engaged. The Department and the University worked diligently in preparing materials, and presentations and organising and hosting virtual meetings with the Panel. All the meetings included presentations, discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. The Panel had the opportunity to meet, talk, and interact with all the participants of all meetings. The discussions were very constructive and fruitful and were conducted in a cooperative manner and attitude. The efficiency and eagerness of the Department to answer questions and provide additional information and clarifications during the meetings are worth noting.

II. Analysis

Based on the materials submitted and the information gathered during the online presentations and discussions, it appears that all members of staff (teaching and administrative), as well as students, alumni and other stakeholders, are aware of the importance of external review, its usefulness and the contribution it can make in improving the Programme. The current external evaluation process showed that the University and the Department are committed to the letter, spirit and process of quality assurance and external review. There is already in place a step- by-step action plan for utilizing the findings and recommendations of the external

evaluation. As they pointed out during the meetings, it will help them improve by enabling them to identify problematic areas and find suitable solutions.

III. Conclusions

The panel's impression is that the Department and the University are committed to external evaluation as a vital component of a quality assurance system. They worked diligently to facilitate the current review and meet its objectives. Overall, their positive approach toward quality assurance and external review is expected to impact the Programme and contribute to its continuous improvement positively. However, more tangible results and a more meaningful assessment regarding this Principle will be possible when a second external evaluation is carried out.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 10: Regular external evaluation of postgraduate study programmes | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

Continue the efforts to improve the Programme.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The PSP deals explicitly with issues, and it is well situated into the context of studies in European Integration. Connections with the local community and the larger European community are exemplary. It is stated that the Programme was designed based on the up-to-date international standards and combines academic knowledge and practical research experience.

All teaching staff should be praised for their firm commitment, concentrated effort, and enthusiasm to reach this point despite the obstacles and difficulties created by limited resources and other external factors. A new generation of younger sociology

enthusiasts has entered the department, and it is manifested in a cooperative atmosphere, mutual respect and collegial spirit. The teaching staff has the appropriate qualifications, which are continuously cultivated by development activities at the Department. The curriculum is organized according to the latest trends in the scientific field. The Programme was praised by the social partners, students and alumni, and it is supported by the leadership of the University.

The Programme delivers a student-centered education that cultivates diverse perspectives and independence and prepares students for important roles in social life. It prioritizes transparent student selection and a full-time attendance model. The Regulation of Studies document provides comprehensive guidance.

The Programme actively encourages and values regular student course evaluations to drive continuous improvement.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Course in methods not visible
- Critical approaches to European integration not explicit in the Programme

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

-A methodology course should be included in the curriculum, where critical aspects of the European integration project could be discussed.

-The development of a stable seminar series (weekly or fortnightly) with the participation of academic staff, research and taught postgraduate students.

-The development of a 'local' annual conference where staff, research students and postgraduate taught students will be able present their work, discuss and offer peer-review comments in a constructive manner. This will familiarise both PSP and research students with the format of presenting original research in appropriate fora.

-The development of mentorship structures that could facilitate professional development, sharing resources and networking, as well as the exchange of ideas and good practice.

-Enhance existing orientation sessions and preliminary reading materials to better equip students, especially those lacking a robust background in European or sociological studies, in order to understand and engage with core concepts from the outset.

- Continue refining interim progress assessments and diversify feedback opportunities to further empower students' self-reflection and academic development.
- Keep emphasizing student feedback mechanisms, ensuring that the programme remains flexible and responsive to evolving academic and professional needs.

- Ensure remote students are regularly and explicitly informed of all available services, including library resources, interlibrary loan processes, and specialized support or career counselling.
- Continue to periodically assess and refine the functionalities of Zoom and *openclass eClass*, guaranteeing that both platforms remain user-friendly and that course materials are consistently updated to meet evolving academic standards.

- A pathway should be established to allow navigation from the Department's website to the main site of the university.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

none

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 | |

