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Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Autism Spectrum Disorders: Health Promotion, Early Diagnosis, Special Education, Individual and Community Intervention

Department: Public and Community Health

Institution: University of West Attica

Date: 12.10.2024

NOTES

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Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Postgraduate Study Programme of Autism Spectrum Disorders of the University of West Attica, 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 (PSP) of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) of the University of West Attica comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- **1.** Professor Panos Vostanis (Chair) University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
- 2. Professor Konstantinos C. Makris Cyprus International Institute for Environmental and Public Health, School of Health Sciences, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus
- **3.** Assoc. Professor Stefanos Volianitis Qatar University, Doha, Qatar
- **4.** Dr Georgios Aislainter
 Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte (BfArM), Bonn, Germany
- **5.** Mr Nikolaos Savvopoulos, PhD Candidate University of Patras, Rio, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) of the University of West Attica (UniWA), the members of the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) examined the documents provided in advance by HAHE, including the Department's Proposal for Accreditation of the Postgraduate Programme, the Guide of Studies, the HAHE Guidelines and other relevant information about the proposed Programme (strategic goals, quality indicators, research outputs, several University and Departmental policies, etc.). The EEAP also consulted the website of the Department.

The review was online and took place on Monday 30/09/2024 and Tuesday 01/10/2024. It was preceded by a private meeting of the EEAP on Monday (via Zoom), and it was followed by further private meetings of the EEAP throughout that week to finalise the report. During the virtual visit, the EEAP had the following meetings:

30/09/2024

17.00 – 18.00: Meeting with Professor Stavros Kaminaris, Vice-Rector; Professor Konstantina Scanavis, Head of Department of Public and Community Health; Professor Anastasia Barbouni, Programme Director; Assistant Professor Maria Korea Drosinou from collaborating Department of Philology, University of Peloponnese; and Dr Marisa Sigala, Director of Quality Assurance (MODIP). The Programme Director gave an overview of the proposed PSP.

01/10/2024

15.00 – 15.45: Meeting with Teaching Staff members (DEP) and Adjunct Teaching Staff for the PSP: Professor Areti Lagiou, Associate Professor Ioannis Koumpouros, Associate Professor Evanthia Sakellari, Lecturer Christos Prapas, Assistant Professor Konstantinos Kesanopoulos, and Assistant Professor Maria Korea Drosinou. The EEAP discussed about teaching and staff issues, workload, delivery approaches, student evaluation, links between teaching and research, learning materials, equipment and resources.

17.15 – 18.15: Meeting with external stakeholders, i.e., employers, clinical and social partners from the public and private sectors: Professor Antigoni Papavasileiou, Director of Child Neurology Department, Pendeli Children's Hospital; Dr Manos Tsalamianos, Director of Child Psychiatry Department, Asklipieio Voula General Hospital; Ms Konstantia Vavanou, Counselor for the Education of Psychologists (Special Educational Staff), Central Greece; Ms Anthi Gkika, Speech Therapist, Director of Sikiarideio Special Needs Kindergarten; Mr Nikolaos Panopoulos, Educational Philologist, Special Vocational Education and Training Laboratory (EEEEK); Ms Aspasia Frangouli, Education Consultant for Special Education and Integrative Education.

The stakeholders discussed with EEAP members various forms and opportunities of collaboration with the Programme, involvement in the formulation of the proposal, and future arrangement for student placements.

18.15 - 18.45: Debrief meeting of EEAP members, in which they discussed the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepared the interim oral report.

18.45 – 19.15: Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector, Programme Director and MODIP Director. In this final meeting, the EEAP provided a general view of some of the conclusions reached.

The EEAP members want to underline that all the above meetings were held in a very constructive atmosphere, but in a very tight time schedule. Overall, the Department and staff programme with presentations and discussions. All members of the Programme were ready and eager to answer the questions by the EEAP, and this facilitated the latter's task in the evaluation and accreditation process.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The cross-institutional Postgraduate Study Programme in Autism Spectrum Disorders aims at providing specialisation, theoretical and clinical knowledge, evidence-based and interdisciplinary skills to graduates from various health and educational fields. In particular, students will be equipped with knowledge and competencies in early recognition or diagnosis, promotion of health and wellbeing, holistic approach, design and implementation of individual and community-based interventions. The curriculum covers a wide spectrum of topics, including epidemiology, aetiological factors, psychopathology, special education, technological applications, working with families, schools and communities, and research methods.

The Programme operates within the framework of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which quantifies academic workload. The complete cost of the Postgraduate Programme amounts to 4.000€, reflecting the total number of 120 required credit units. Teaching is provided in the Greek language, although applicants are expected to have good knowledge of English language, in order to access the bibliography and other learning materials.

The postgraduate journey spans two academic years, equivalent to four semesters, providing students with the flexibility to tailor their educational path according to their individual needs and preferences. The first semester consists of five compulsory lessons (topics), while during the second semester students can select between two specialisations (education- or health-

focused approaches). Semester 3 involves the completion of a dissertation, while semester 4 includes a practical training (internship).

Upon successful completion of the PSP in Autism Spectrum Disorders, graduates are conferred with a Postgraduate Diploma with Specialisation. This qualification opens doors to various career opportunities in education and health settings for people with ASD across their life span. Additionally, the Programme prepares graduates for leadership positions in service development and organisation, as well as policy-making. The Postgraduate Study Programme of Studies in Autism Spectrum Disorders is hosted by the University of West Attica, in collaboration with the University of Peloponnese, Department of Philology. Both institutions offer high-quality infrastructure for face-to-face and web-based learning.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

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

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

- Evaluation Report of Quality Assurance Unit
- Quality Assurance Policy of academic unit for development and improvement of PSP
- Quality Goal Setting Strategy of PSP
- Feasibility and Sustainability study for the new PSP

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Relevant documentation included the Quality Assurance Policy and the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. The Quality Assurance Policy outlines the mission of the Department of Public and Community Health, and the PSP in particular, with reference to aims and objectives. The main aims relate to the knowledge, skills and competencies that students and graduates are expected to acquire through the PSP.

The Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP defines specific strategic priorities and quality objectives. The strategic aims defined include the following: the upgrading and quality control of the PSP; the enhancement of the image and the recognition of the PSP; the further professional development of staff members; and the enhancement of links with external organisations. Moreover, the Goal Setting Strategy outlines specific indicators, present and future targets, actions to be taken to achieve the objectives, responsibilities and timelines. The Accreditation Panel noted the important completion of a SWOT analysis that considered strengths, potential weaknesses, opportunities and risks. In addition, feasibility and sustainability studies informed the SWOT analysis and the PSP proposal.

Both documents are clearly written and provide a solid basis for planning and implementation in relation to achieving quality standards. Overall, the academic unit has established a Quality

Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP and serves as a guideline and a point of reference for future planning and decision-making.

II. Analysis

The information outlined in the relevant documents, as well as the information provided by administrators and Faculty members, indicates that the academic unit is committed to the implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy. There is an acknowledgement of the need to make a commitment towards continuous improvement. The role of student feedback and participation is considered important in continuous improvement, as shown by the importance assigned to this strategic aim in the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. Moreover, continuous improvement appears to be based on the creation and maintenance of a healthy and collaborative organisational culture.

The goals set by the academic unit follow the SMART framework in that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-specific. Quality goals are combined with suitable performance indicators, which creates a framework for relevant planning and initiatives for improvement. These goals will be monitored and updated on a regular basis. Internal processes for quality assurance are used to identify areas for improvement, which are subsequently discussed in meetings.

The specified learning outcomes are in agreement with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The academic unit has demonstrated commitment to the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as indicated by departmental actions, policies and initiatives. For instance, this is shown by the fact that the academics recruited and employed in the Programme are highly qualified.

III. Conclusions

The PSP has established a Quality Assurance Policy, which ensures that the PSP will be monitored and evaluated on a systematic basis. The process provides specific directions for improvement, which is considered necessary for further action. It would be important to revisit quality indicators after the first student uptake and adjust accordingly. These could relate to student numbers, and/or the student ratio between the two specialization routes.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

This is a clearly systematically and evidence-based proposal, which fulfils quality assurance criteria at this stage. It would be useful to consider an alternative plan on the balance of student/staff ratio and health/education-focused placements and pathways at the end of the first academic year (semester 2) of the first student cohort.

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 cross-institutional Postgraduate Studies Programme "Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Health Promotion, Early Intervention, Special Education, Personal and Community Intervention" was approved by the University Senate in 2024, led by the Department of Public and Community Health of the School of Public Health of the University of West Attica (UniWA) in collaboration with the Department of Philology of the University of Peloponnese. The PSP has two specialisations: Specialisation 1: Interventions in special education, and Specialisation 2: Interventions in clinical practice: individual and community intervention. The programme is an 80% distance learning based PSP, which primarily aims to provide excellent training for professionals of different disciplines in ASD, focusing on the interconnection of the elements of Public Health, Health Promotion, Special Education and Training. The venue for conducting the 20% of all courses will be the facilities of the Department of Public and Community Health of the University of West Attica.

This PSP is a truly interdisciplinary programme and it is relevant to graduates of medicine, nursing, public health, literature, philosophy and philology, occupational therapy, social work, psychology, physiotherapy, and pedagogical and education sciences. The PSP requires a total of 120 credits (ECTS). The programme is taught in Greek, but students shall be fluent in English for the purposes of conducting research, writing the thesis and for writing reports for the courses. During the four semesters of the PSP, postgraduate students are required to attend mostly online 10 compulsory courses, to execute a research thesis, and also to carry out an internship with a relevant organisation that deals with ASD cases.

Students will be introduced to concepts, methodologies, tools and applications related to epidemiology, public health, theoretical approaches for ASD, and neurobiology of ASD

disorders. Students will be familiar with the developmental and educational milestones of children and adolescents, and also with the principles of child and adolescent mental health. In the 2nd semester, students who choose the first specialisation are familiarised with curricula, the organization of ASD related teaching programmes in Special Education and Training Schools. They will be trained on best practices of ASD intervention programmes of neurodevelopmental focus, special education and training. Subsequently, students in this specialisation become familiar with and cultivate good practices, skills, and methods that are research-supported to characterize ASD-friendly schools. In addition, they are trained in the principles of interdisciplinary assessment and the functioning of an interdisciplinary team in the school setting. Students who choose the second specialisation will become familiar with comorbidities in ASD and the diagnostic and treatment programmes together with the theories of pathophysiology, considering approaches focused on both the individual and community levels.

Practical training, in the form of an internship will complement the knowledge and skills obtained from the classes, with a clear practical focus on ASD cases and affected groups. The internship is autonomous and supervised. Both the internship, as well as the research-based thesis, will enhance students' skills in research methodology design, research projects, and the thesis aims to familiarise students with the basic principles of research methodology in ASD prevention, diagnosis and treatment applications/programmes.

The PSP is delivered by successful and reputable Faculty members in the field of public and community health, with specialisation in ASD, from the Department of Public and Community Health at the University of West Attica. It offers a modern approach in the theory and practice of ASD, aiming at education and scientific training of students to develop skills and expertise to understand, conduct and critically evaluate and communicate ASD-related knowledge.

The linking of teaching and research is established with various pedagogical means in the classroom and beyond, such as research seminars, development of research methodology and study design skills, invited lectures from guest speakers, student engagement in Faculty members' research and the research-based thesis. The students will benefit from the experience of senior and well experienced Faculty members in the field of ASD research, with considerable academic activity.

Stakeholders expressed confidence and the belief that this new PSP is highly attractive and will be quite useful to graduates from both health sciences and those from special education fields of study.

There is a plan to include and assess student evaluation surveys, aiming to high completion rates. Mentoring of new Faculty members by senior Faculty is planned to take place on a one to one basis.

Information regarding admission and graduation requirements, course syllabi, lecture outlines, expected learning outcomes and skills, student evaluation procedure, infrastructure details that students need to know, is available in the study guide.

II. Analysis

The PSP in "Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Health Promotion, Early Intervention, Special Education, Personal and Community Intervention" is a new programme in Greek language offering an interdisciplinary approach in studying the ASD theory and practice covering aspects of prevention, diagnosis and treatment for various age groups. This is a novel and specialised PSP bringing together Faculty members from two departments being in totally different Schools, such as the Public Health and the Philology departments. This interface would be highly beneficial to offer to students with the interdisciplinarity and the skills needed for this highly complex and multifactorial disease of ASD.

A strong demand is anticipated for this PSP, because of the interdepartmental focus and lack of similar specialised programmes in Greece. It is a well-designed PSP with a concise and easy to follow study guide, covering most aspects and principles required for the specialisation of students in the field of ASD. The PSP benefits from an established Department of Public Health at the University of West Attica with long-standing contribution in the Greek state health system policy and community health practice. Course descriptions and syllabi have been provided, with clearly stating detailed content, learning outcomes and skills expected to be acquired by students, the supporting structure of the learning processes, and the student evaluation procedure. Nevertheless, because this is mainly a distance learning programme (up to 80%), the study guide would benefit by including in detail the characteristics and structure of the distance learning process such as the asynchronous lectures, duration, structure, etc. The curriculum creation process involved consultation with various stakeholders, external experts and students that strengthened the content of the PSP curriculum structure. The curriculum includes an ethics course but only for one specialisation, albeit ethical issues and data security concerns are relevant for both specialisations.

The website of the PSP in both Greek and English is adequate and brand new. Gathering the PSP's Faculty members' research activities in the form of manuscript publications, research methods and protocols, resulting grants, conference proceeding announcements, etc., would be a good advertisement for prospective applicants by uploading them on the PSP website. Social media are modern communication tools (e.g., Linkedin, Twitter) that would be valuable to promote the activities of this new PSP to a wide audience.

III. Conclusions

The PSP provides a very well-designed study programme providing consolidated knowledge and skills in ASD risk management and its comorbidities. The panel has found the PSP to be fully compliant with Principle 2.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduat	e Study
Programmes	
Fully compliant	Χ
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The PSP website content of research would be enriched with research contributions from all teaching Faculty members.

The Panel recommends slight modifications in the schedule/course programme by making the Ethics course mandatory for both specialisations.

The Panel recommends detailing further the asynchronous study materials in the study guide and in the syllabi, and website, since this is a distance learning based course.

Social media of the PSP would greatly benefit the communication of the PSP work in both active and prospective students, including all stakeholders.

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.
- **t** 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 structure and design of the cross-institutional PSP in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are clearly described in the study guide, various regulations and in the supplementary documentation. All the necessary information has been uploaded on the cross-institutional PSP's webpage (https://asdmaster.uniwa.gr/) in a very well-structured and detailed way. It should be noted that the webpage is very modern and very well designed and exists in both Greek and English.

The latest news/announcements and the application form for the year 2024-2025 are already on the webpage.

The criteria for entry into the Interinstitutional PSP are clearly outlined:

1) Degree/Diploma level: 15%

2) Degree/Diploma Thesis performance: 10%

3) Research or professional activity: 10%

4) Publications and authorship: 10%

5) Letters of recommendation: 5%

6) Oral interview: 50%

The online application is very modern and developed on a web-based submission procedure (not a document to be sent via e-mail).

The available materials describe clearly with sufficient details all the necessary information that the students will require for admission to the PSP, as well as the courses taught and the procedures followed during the PSP.

More specifically, the following regulations and procedures are included: the student selection procedures and the required supporting documents, duration of the study (4 semesters), study programme together with a description of the courses, the two specialisations, the student's rights and obligations, the way their progress is monitored, facilities available to the students, and availability and granting of scholarships. The procedures and requirements regarding the writing of the Diploma thesis are included in a separate specific document with clear instructions.

Information on student mobility programmes, information on the course instructors, the procedure of award and recognition of the Diploma, and any relevant public information for the cross-institutional PSP.

There are even provisions for the postgraduate students with links to autism in Europe and the School of Public Health. The Department of Interconnection, Mediation & Innovation is also available.

There is a welcoming ceremony on the first day programme, in which the Course Director provides information on the cross-institutional PSP and details on the facilities of the University. The technological infrastructures and the e-services of the University of West Attica are made available to the students.

The academic tutor/advisor and a complaints procedure is also made known to the students. The Department and the University appears to have an efficient system in place to manage complaints.

The cross-institutional PSP offers some practical training with "hands-on" experience. Depending on the specialisation, there are centres for the training of students. There are centres where students with disabilities and/or special educational needs attend. The PSP will organise practical trainings in Centres for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support (KEDASY) (as renamed from "Centres for Educational and Counselling Support

(KESY)" under paragraph 1 of article 11 of Law No. 4823/2021 [Government Gazette A' 136/03-08-2021]), Medical and Educational Centres of the Ministry of Health, Municipal Counselling Centres, Community Mental Health Centres, schools operating within public hospitals and Public or Private Legal Entities (NPDD or NPID) supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity.

Ethical issues, such as those concerning data protection, intellectual property rights and rules for protection against fraud, are governed by the e-learning regulation and are clearly described in the available PSP's documentation.

The ECTS are applied across the curriculum and procedures and requirements regarding student mobility programmes are established.

The student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment aspects of the cross-institutional PSP are demonstrated by offering flexible learning options to students, including online teaching materials and updated technological platforms/solutions as part of the institution's infrastructure (e.g. e-Class MS Teams and Moodle). Teaching methods include interactive lectures (mostly delivered online up to 80%), synchronous and asynchronous and remote learning.

II. Analysis

There is evidence that the cross-institutional PSP has developed and applied all rules and regulations relevant with Principle 3. This information is presented in the study guide, regulations and in additional relevant documentation.

A focused and useful PowerPoint presentation dealing with all the aspects of Principle 3 (in addition to the documentation in pdf and on the webpage) was provided to the Accreditation Panel.

Prospective Greek students and English speaking persons have a clear and detailed picture of the selection procedure, the monitoring of their progress, and regulations governing the drafting of the Diploma thesis, mobility programmes, scholarship opportunities and elearning. Clear and relevant regulations for the study, thesis, practical training and mobility are available in Greek language.

The cross-institutional PSP embraces a flexible learning model, integrating both in-person but mainly online sessions using modern technology, as indicated by the design of the webpage and the supporting materials.

The practical training will be organised in various centres. This is expected to allow flexibility and appropriate supervision.

Academic support is expected to be provided through the Academic Advisor role, and through effective communication ensured by the motivated Course Director and the teaching staff.

Having stated that the documentation to be available to the students is of very high quality and excellently prepared, some minor improvements may be still required:

The assessment procedure of the students during their studies is not described as well and detailed as the criteria and process for the entry to the programme. It will be performed via written exams, but it is unclear whether other forms of assessment such as short reports or presentations and mid-term assessments will be offered.

Another example for minor improvement is the practical training, which is described as 750 hours with an emphasis on the 450 hours in special centres (180 and 270 hours during the 3rd and 4th semester, respectively) and 30 ECTS, whilst the information on the PSP's webpage is stating only 750 hours (without details) with 6 ECTS.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview any students since the programme has not started yet.

III. Conclusions

The cross-institutional PSP has successfully and in detail prepared its documentation for all regulations, procedures, criteria, requirements and relevant issues for student admission, progression, Diploma thesis writing and recognition of studies and certification, in alignment with Principle 3, as stated by HAHE.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Add	mission,	
Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies,		
and certification		
Fully compliant	Х	
Substantially compliant		
Partially compliant		
Non-compliant		

Panel Recommendations

The assessment procedure of the students should be described at the same high level and detail as the entry requirements.

The details of the required hours and ECTS of the practical training should be harmonised in the documentation and the webpage.

The focused and very informative PowerPoint presentation dealing with all aspects of Principle 3 relevant for the students should be made available to the students during the welcoming ceremony.

The cross-institutional PSP could also consider distributing together with the presentation a leaflet with the study guide and all seven regulations (study, Diploma thesis, practical training, mobility, complaints procedure, academic advisor and e-learning).

The cross-institutional PSP should encourage students' participation in mobility programmes. Increased communication of the availability of mobility programmes would bring students in contact with career possibilities and pathways that may be inaccessible otherwise.

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

There is no set of merit-based criteria and procedures in place for the recruitment of the teaching staff of the PSP. Similarly, there is no defined strategy for attracting quality academic members of staff.

In the discussions with staff of the PSP, it was revealed that there are a number of professional development opportunities for the teaching staff, including staff mobility and teaching, and research support. Surprisingly, these opportunities are not presented in the Accreditation Proposal of the PSP.

The teaching workload amounts to 3-5 hours per week for each member of staff.

The publications record and impact of the staff (H-indices and citations) are appropriate for the academic rank of each member of staff.

The study programme includes a mandatory thesis, which is aimed to prepare the students for possible future research-based study. Also, there are two research methods courses (basic Epidemiology and Research Methods) aimed to provide the theoretical background that can support the preparation of the thesis.

II. Analysis

The department is following the criteria and procedures outlined in the relevant legislation for the recruitment of the academic staff, but there are no established specific merit-based criteria for the recruitment process of the teaching staff of the PSP, at least not presented in the Accreditation Proposal or stated in the Department's Regulations and Procedures document.

Academic members of staff receive significant support from the department for Professional Development. Specifically, there is flexibility for research leave, staff mobility through the Erasmus+ programme and allowance for Open Access publication charges and conference participation. Also, there is support for Teaching Development by a dedicated unit within the department.

Based on the publications record and impact of the staff (H-indices and citations), which are appropriate for the academic rank of each member of staff, it is deemed that the workload allows for engagement in research activities. There is significant research productivity by the academic members of staff.

Furthermore, there is no defined (or at least clearly outlined and presented in the Accreditation Proposal of the PSP) research strategy of the PSP focusing on specific scientific areas. Currently, even though there is significant research productivity, nevertheless, there is no specific focus of these publications.

III. Conclusions

The PSP complies to a large extent to the criteria of Principle 4, and its application is deemed satisfactory.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

It is recommended that the PSP formulates and establishes a focused research strategy. The benefits of such strategy can be manifold.

Firstly, the PSP should develop a more pronounced research identity that can attract quality external members of staff.

Secondly, it should also promote the development of criteria-based recruitment of future academic staff by further clarifying and highlighting the academic characteristics of the PSP, and hence justify the relevance of the prospective members of staff with the PSP.

Thirdly, it should promote more efficiently the PSP to potential students.

It is also recommended that the PSP formulates a set of criteria for the recruitment of academic staff. Such practice will not only improve the compliance of the PSP with the requirements of Accreditation but also improve transparency that consequently may also attract quality external members of staff.

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

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

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g., whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed and foreign students, students

with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the Institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance proves -on the one hand- the quantity and quality of the available facilities and services, and -on the other hand- that students are aware of all available services.

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

To address the teaching and learning needs of its students, the PSP "Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Health Promotion, Early Intervention, Special Education, Personal and Community Intervention" in the Department of Public and Community Health offers ample infrastructure and support services, ensuring students have immediate access to these resources. The internal quality assurance process systematically monitors the quantity and quality of the available infrastructure and services, ensuring that students are aware of what is provided. Corrective actions are initiated in the case of deficiencies. Students are informed about the available services mainly through the University's and programme's website and the student guide.

The PSP is supported by permanent Faculty staff from the collaborating departments, along with external associates when needed, including: 10 Faculty members from the collaborating departments for teaching and supporting educational activities, one special technical laboratory staff member from the leading department for teaching and support roles, one PhD candidate from the leading department assisting with teaching duties, and one administrative staff member from the leading department for administrative tasks, all of whom fall under the Personnel Support and Development Policy, whether permanent or external. As this PSP aims to enrol 60 students per academic cycle, adequate provisions must be in place to ensure that both administrative and academic support is sufficient throughout the entire academic year, specifically through the academic advisor and other staff.

The PSP utilises the facilities of the hosting department at the UniWA campus for in-person teaching and daily operations. These facilities include a lecture hall for 140 attendees, two offices for staff and administration, a library, and nearby dining services. For remote learning, the programme uses MS Teams for live online classes and Open e-Class for asynchronous instruction.

The students are offered through the PSP and UniWA a range of services, including free meals (based on eligibility), access to free healthcare, psychological and counselling services, library resources, computer room, educational materials, and opportunities to participate in sports and cultural activities, while there is an accessibility unit for students with disabilities, ensuring equal access on academic studies. As this is a newly established PSP, it has yet to be determined whether the educational materials and library resources are adequately equipped.

UniWA provides students with electronic services to enhance their academic experience. These include a unified account for access to various applications such as the Student Information System, Open e-Class, Microsoft Office 365, VPN, and Filesender, alongside tools for file management, editing, and secure access. The e-Class enables asynchronous distance learning accessible via any web browser, with no requirements of specialised technical skills. The PSP provisions a substantial percentage of the educational process (up to 80%) to be conducted via distance learning methods, amounting to a total of 96 ECTS. This includes 55% of the credits (66 ECTS) allocated for synchronous distance learning and 25% (30 ECTS) designated for asynchronous distance learning.

There is a well-detailed tuition plan in the materials shared with the Panel. The resources of this PSP primarily come from tuition fees, amounting to 4.000 euros per student per academic cycle (maximum number of students is 60). Tuition fees for upcoming years are allocated as follows: up to 30% for tuition fee exemptions as per law, and 30% for ELKE. A substantial percentage (33%) is allocated to publicity and promotion costs and purchase of educational material. There is also provision for distributing funds for mobility of students/staff and scholarship (for one student) in the context of supporting administrative staff (10 hours/week), and supporting students in financial need.

II. Analysis

The newly established PSP in Public and Community Health at UniWA offers adequate student support through in-person and remote learning facilities, free meals, healthcare, counselling, and cultural activities, although the contribution of University of the Peloponnese in support of students was not made clear. With a team of Faculty, technical staff, and external associates, the programme ensures educational quality through systematic monitoring. Electronic services like a unified student account and Open e-Class enhance the learning experience. A substantial percentage of 80% of the curriculum (96 ECTS) can be delivered online. Funded primarily by tuition fees, the programme allocates resources for staff mobility, scholarships, and educational material, though the adequacy of these materials and library resources needs to be determined after students' evaluation of the programme.

III. Conclusions

Overall, students benefit from a range of University facilities that enhance academic experience at the UniWA. There are available asynchronous learning platforms that facilitate the learning process, and students have access to educational materials, both electronically and physically, through the Department's library. Students should be able to evaluate library services, to ensure that they have immediate access to resources related to this PSP during courses and their dissertations. The University also provides sports facilities and promotes cultural activities. There is a detailed tuition plan that provides not only for the operational costs but also for scholarships and mobility, however, provision to distribute more funds in support of more students through scholarships is desired.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Library services should be adequately equipped in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), to ensure that students have immediate access to materials, and students should be able to evaluate the materials and library service.

It is highly recommended to attract or distribute more funds to scholarships (once the PSP is promoted).

It is recommended to establish access to the University of the Peloponnese facilities and support, at least the ones that can be offered through distance (if possible).

Ensure that there is adequate staff to support all enrolled students (in case of maximum number of 60), and if the target of enrolling 60 students is not met, establish plans to maintain the smooth operation of the PSP and properly allocate funds.

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

From the presentations and the submitted documents, it is obvious that the PSP is ready to take the internal and external evaluation processes seriously.

The Director and the Faculty of the cross-institutional PSP are aware of the internal evaluation, which was conducted under the supervision of the University of West Attica MODIP based on the institution's Internal Quality Assurance System, and which received certification in December 2020 (Report of the Internal Quality Assurance System of the University of West Attica, 23/2/2021).

The Director and the Faculty of the cross-institutional PSP are fully informed and understand the importance of internal and external evaluation/accreditation of the programme.

They are all committed to participate and to contribute in a constructive manner to these processes, through the quality policy of the supervising department for its PSP and the strategic objectives of the cross-institutional PSP, to adapt their work offer to the recommendations of the internal and external evaluation reports.

A prior evaluation has not been conducted, since the program will start in 2025.

It was identified that the PSP uses a good infrastructure for teaching, thesis work and practical training. This is a focused destination for specific graduates, with potential for employment post-graduation in a field which is much in need of experts.

The panel could not be presented with any completed student questionnaires, since the cross-institutional PSP has not started yet.

According to input provided to the Accreditation Panel during the online evaluation, the cross-institutional PSP Faculty members know the importance of the external review and its contributions to the programme's continuous improvement. The Director of the PSP appeared ready to be involved in applying any necessary follow-up actions.

At the same time, the cross-institutional PSP has performed a SWOT analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and to assess the opportunities and threats of the environment. This SWOT analysis was welcomed by the Accreditation Panel.

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis (expected to be performed in regular intervals), the Director and the Faculty are committed to make potential adjustments to their strategy by addressing internal weaknesses by using additional available resources and building on strengths, focusing on strengths in order to exploit opportunities in the external environment and adjusting the target setting of the cross-institutional PSP.

II. Analysis

The preparedness for internal and external evaluation of this cross-institutional PSP is welcomed.

The Accreditation Panel, based on the preparation of the materials, the setup of the webpage and the commitment of the Faculty is confident that the programme will continue to improve all aspects of the educational process. This is an important programme component toward the desired continuous improvement of quality, application of relevant good practices and preparations of the needed expertise in the field of ASD.

It is expected that the well-prepared SWOT analysis will be performed at regular intervals to serve its main purpose i.e. emphasise the strengths, identify the weaknesses and exploit the opportunities.

III. Conclusions

The commitment and preparedness for internal and external evaluation of the Director and the Faculty of this cross-institutional PSP is acceptable according to the HAHE standards.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The cross-institutional PSP may need to re-evaluate certain aspects such as the minimum and maximum number of students after the first year of its operation.

The cross-institutional PSP may need to prepare some documentation on Faculty discussions concerning the recruitment of Faculty staff, the progress of the PSP and the areas that need improvement from the Faculty's point of view, after the first year of its operation.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

This is a clearly systematic and evidence-based Postgraduate Study Programme.

The PSP provides consolidated knowledge and skills in various aspects of ASD recognition and management, both at individual and systemic level. It will fill an important learning and skills gap, which will benefit professionals across various disciplines, services, stakeholders and, crucially, end-users.

Its interdisciplinary context and provision for practice experience are real strengths. To this extent, there is strong collaboration with various stakeholders and settings.

Teaching staff have strong expertise and research track record in related fields.

Collaboration between two Universities will enrich student experience and quality.

There are robust mechanisms in place for quality assurance.

There is detailed documentation for all regulations, procedures, criteria, requirements and relevant issues for student admission, progression, Diploma thesis writing and recognition of studies and certification.

There is provision and infrastructure for ongoing student support.

The SWOT analysis has informed various components of the PSP. There is commitment and preparedness for ongoing internal and external evaluation.

II. Areas of Weakness

Need for small adjustments of the curriculum.

Some minor discrepancies on students' assessment and requirements between different documents and platforms.

Lack of research strategy that could be aligned to overall training and the PSP.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

It would be useful to consider an alternative plan on the balance of student/staff ratio and health/education-focused placements and pathways at the end of the first academic year (Semester 2) of the first student cohort.

The Panel recommends slight modifications in the schedule/course programme by making the Ethics course mandatory for both specialisations.

The Panel recommends detailing further the asynchronous study materials in the study guide and in the syllabi and website, since this is a distance learning based course.

It is recommended that the PSP formulates and establishes a focused research strategy. The benefits of such strategy can be manifold.

The assessment procedure of the students should be described to the same high level and detail as the entry requirements.

The details of the required hours and ECTS of the practical training should be harmonised in the documentation and the webpage.

The PSP should encourage students' participation in mobility programmes. Increased communication of the availability of mobility programmes would bring students in contact with career possibilities and pathways that may be inaccessible otherwise.

It is highly recommended to attract or distribute more funds to scholarships (once the PSP is promoted).

Ensure that there is adequate staff to support all enrolled students (in case of maximum number of 60), and if the target of enrolling 60 students is not met, establish plans to maintain the smooth operation of the PSP and properly allocate funds.

The PSP may need to prepare some documentation on Faculty discussions concerning the recruitment of Faculty members, the progress of the PSP and the areas that need improvement from the Faculty's point of view, after the first year of its operation.

I. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 4.

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: Not applicable.

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: Not applicable.

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	
1. Panos Vostanis	
2. Konstantinos Makris	
3. Stefanos Volianitis	
4. Georgios Aislaitner	
5. Nikolaos Savvopoulos	