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# STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ACCREDITATION OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

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Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| STAGE 1. EVALUATION OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA OF ORGANISATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CYCLE       | 3  |
| 1.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING, FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT   | 3  |
| STAGE 2. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME  | 6  |
| 2.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY  | 6  |
| 2.2. DESIGN, APPROVAL AND MONITORING OF THE QUALITY OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES   | 7  |
| 2.3. STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH IN LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS  | 8  |
| 2.4. STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND AWARD OF DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCE OF THE NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES | 9  |
| 2.5. ENSURING THE COMPETENCE AND HIGH QUALITY OF THE TEACHING STAFF OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES   | 10 |
| 2.6. LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES   | 11 |
| 2.7. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION FOR THE ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES   | 12 |
| 2.8. PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES   | 13 |
| 2.9. PERIODIC INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES   | 14 |
| 2.10. REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES   | 15 |

## **STAGE 1. EVALUATION OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA OF ORGANISATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CYCLE**

### **1.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING, FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT**

**Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new undergraduate programmes. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.**

#### **In particular**

*By decision of the Institutional Senate, the Institutions should address in their strategy issues related to their academic structure in academic units and study programmes, which support the profile, the vision, the mission and the strategic goal setting of the Institution, within a specific time frame. The strategy of the Institution should articulate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities or risks from the operation of new academic units and study programmes, and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.*

*The strategy of their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new academic units and new study programmes.*

*More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programmes should be accompanied by a four-year business plan to meet their specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources and management systems.*

*During the evaluation of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their individual academic units in terms of meeting the criteria for the organisation of undergraduate study programmes, particular attention must be placed upon:*

#### **a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit**

*The profile and the mission of the department should be specified. The scientific field of the department should be included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorisation of scientific fields in education, by UNESCO (ISCED 2013).*

#### **b. The Institutional strategy for its academic development**

*The academic development strategy for the operation of the department and the new study programme should be set out. This strategy should result from the investigation of the factors that influence the studies and the research in the scientific field, the investigation of the institutional, economic, developmental, and social parameters that apply in the external environment of the Institution, as well as the possibilities and capabilities that exist within its internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT Analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reason for selecting the scientific field of the new department.*

#### **c. The documentation of the feasibility of the department and the study programme**

*The feasibility of the operation of the new department should be justified based on:*

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programmes of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*

- *the existing academic map; the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field*

**d. Sustainability of the new department**

*Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services and available resources in terms of:*

- *educational and research facilities (buildings, rooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.)*
- *staff (existing and new, by category, specialty, rank and laboratory). A distinct five-year plan is required, documenting the commitment of the School and of the Institution for filling in the necessary faculty positions*
- *funding (funding possibility from public or non-public sources)*
- *services (central, departmental / student support, digital, administrative, etc.)*

**e. The structure of studies**

*The structure of studies should be briefly presented, namely:*

- **The organisation of studies:** *The courses and the categories to which they belong; the distribution of the courses into semesters; the alignment of the courses with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).*
- **Learning process:** *Documentation must be provided as to how the student-centered approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- **Learning outcomes:** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, as well as the professional rights awarded must be mentioned.*

**f. The number of admitted students**

- *The proposed number of admitted students over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *Any similar departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed department should be mentioned.*

**g. Research**

- *It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.*

**h. Quality assurance**

- *The quality assurance policy and quality assurance target-setting should be stated, as they have arisen from the gained experience of internal and external evaluation(s) of the Institution to date.*

**Relevant documentation**

- Explanatory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points with the necessary documentation
- Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution that will include its proposed academic reconstruction, in view of the planned operation of new department(s) (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)
- Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new academic unit and the new study programme
- Four-year business plan

**Stage 2 evaluation is subject to a positive Stage 1 evaluation**

**In the case of a negative Stage 1 evaluation, the Institution and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs are informed about the shortcomings identified and a relevant decision of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs is expected, in accordance with the relevant legislative provisions.**

## **STAGE 2. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME**

### **2.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY**

**The Institution should have in place an accredited Internal Quality Assurance System, and should formulate and apply a Quality Assurance Policy, which is part of its strategy, specialises in the operation of the new academic units and the new study programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programmes.**

#### **In particular**

*The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new study programme offered by the academic unit. In order to implement this policy, the Institution, among others, commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate: the adequacy and quality of the academic unit's resources; the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum; the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff; the quality of support services of the academic unit and its staffing with appropriate administrative personnel. The Institution also commits itself to conduct an annual internal evaluation of the new undergraduate programme (UGP), realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.*

#### **Relevant documentation**

- Quality Assurance Policy
- Quality Targeting (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)

## **2.2. DESIGN, APPROVAL AND MONITORING OF THE QUALITY OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

Institutions should design the new undergraduate programmes following a defined written process, which will involve the participants, information sources and the approval committees for the programme. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications and the ways to achieve them are set out in the programme design. The above details, as well as information on the programme's structure, are published in the Student Guide.

### **In particular**

*The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programmes is the introduction of courses for the acquisition of digital skills by the students. The above components should be taken into consideration and constitute the subject of the programme design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labour market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme, the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the option of providing work experience to the students, the linking of teaching and research, the international experience in study programmes of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the programme 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 Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Senate decision for the establishment of the UGP
- Curriculum of the new UGP (courses for the acquisition of digital skills are included)
- Student Guide
- Course syllabi
- Teaching staff (name list including subject area, employment relationship, assignment of teaching in the UGP and other study programmes)
- QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new study programme and its compliance with the Standards.

### **2.3. STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH IN LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS**

Institutions should ensure that the new undergraduate programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach.

#### **In particular**

*In the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching, the academic unit*

- ✓ *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling 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 application of pedagogical methods aiming at improvement*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys*
- ✓ *reinforces 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 students' complaints*

#### **Relevant documentation**

- *Questionnaires for assessment by the students*
- *Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of the academic advisor*
- *Reference to the planned teaching modes and assessment methods*



## **2.4. STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS, AND AWARD OF DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCE OF THE NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES**

**Institutions should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (admission, progression, recognition and degree award).**

### **In particular**

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

- ✓ *the registration procedure of the admitted students and the necessary documents - according to the law - and the support of the newly admitted students*
- ✓ *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- ✓ *internship issues, granting of scholarships*
- ✓ *the procedures and terms for writing the thesis (diploma or degree)*
- ✓ *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and assurance of the progress of students in their studies as well as*
- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

*Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes, and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).*

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

### **Relevant documentation**

- Internal regulation for the operation of the new study programme (Senate decision)
- Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments
- Printed Diploma Supplement

## **2.5. ENSURING THE COMPETENCE AND HIGH QUALITY OF THE TEACHING STAFF OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES**

**Institutions should assure themselves of the competence, the level of knowledge and skills of the teaching staff of the academic units, and apply fair and transparent processes for their recruitment, training and further development.**

### **In particular**

*The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the suitable categories of staff, the appropriate subject areas and specialisations, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training – development, and an effective 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 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 members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment
- Regulations or employment contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff
- Policy for staff recruitment, support and development
- Performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work

## **2.6. LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

**Academic units should have adequate funding to cover all their teaching and learning needs. 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, boarding, career and social policy services, etc.).**

### **In particular**

*Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources and means to support learning and academic activity in general, in order to offer to the students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications 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. Students should be informed about 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.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Description of the infrastructure and services made available to the academic unit by the Institution for the support of learning and academic activities (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.)
- Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)
- Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services

## **2.7. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION FOR THE ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

**Institutions and their academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analysing and using information, aimed at the efficient management of undergraduate programmes of study and related activities, in an integrated, effective and easily accessible way.**

### **In particular**

*Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programmes feed data into the internal quality assurance system. The information collected depends, to some extent, on the type of accreditation (initial or re-accreditation). The following data is of interest: key performance indicators for the student body profile, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the programme(s), availability of learning resources and student support, career paths of graduates. During the initial accreditation, the data concerning the profile of the academic unit and the structure of the study programme must be entered.*

### **Relevant documentation**

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

## **2.8. PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

**Institutions and academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and readily accessible way. The relevant information should be up-to-date, clear and objective.**

### **In particular**

*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 new undergraduate programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the new study programme
- Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information
- Provision for website maintenance and updating

## **2.9. PERIODIC INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES**

**Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new programmes, so as to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and amendments, with a view to continuous improvement. Any actions taken in the above context, should be communicated to all parties concerned.**

### **In particular**

*Regular monitoring, review and revision of the new 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: the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; the changing needs of society; the students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students; the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the programme. 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.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum
- Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the UGP and the learning process
- Feedback processes on strategy implementation and quality targeting of the new UGP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)

## **2.10. REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

**New undergraduate 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.**

### **In particular**

*HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports submitted by the panels, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with 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.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution for the establishment and successive improvement of the operation of the new UGP (incl. reference to the action plan)