



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ACCREDITATION OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF HEI IN EXISTING ACADEMIC UNITS

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Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
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Scope of the Standards

The scope of these Standards covers the initial quality accreditation of new Undergraduate Study Programmes that will operate in existing academic units of Higher Education Institutions, which already offer an Undergraduate Study Programme.

The Standards include two stages of evaluation. A positive evaluation at stage 1 is a prerequisite for the continuation to stage 2 of the evaluation.

The academic units that offer more than one Undergraduate Study Programmes must fulfil the basic qualitative and quantitative requirements and criteria set by decision of the HAHE Supreme Council regarding the establishment of new Departments. The major factors to be considered for the positive evaluation and initial accreditation of more than one Undergraduate Study Programme relate to:

- issues of sustainability, adequacy and allocation of resources available for the delivery of the programme
- the solid strategic documentation of the feasibility and the necessity of the programme
- the preference demonstrated on behalf of the students, and the expected demand of the programme's graduates in the labour market
- the good organisation and maturity of the internal quality assurance systems of the Institutions

In case of a non-positive evaluation at stage 1, the Institution is informed of the specific deficiencies or weaknesses identified, and the HAHE formulates recommendations towards the appropriate alternatives.

Any initial accreditation of a new Undergraduate Study Programme in an existing academic unit where a basic Undergraduate Study Programme of the same title operates, is forwarded to the HAHE Supreme Council for updating the data regarding the differentiation of the academic map.

STAGE 1: EVALUATION OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT REGARDING THE FULFILMENT OF THE CRITERIA FOR THE ORGANISATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CYCLE

1.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING, FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACADEMIC UNIT AND THE NEW STUDY PROGRAMME

Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and the provision of new Undergraduate Study Programmes (USP) in existing academic units which already provide an Undergraduate Study Programme. 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 Study Programmes, and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.

The strategy for their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies for the provision of new Undergraduate Study Programmes, especially in existing academic units which already offer an Undergraduate Study Programme.

More specifically, the sustainability study of the new Undergraduate Study Programmes should address the mode of allocation of the resources provided by the academic unit among the existing and the new Undergraduate Study Programmes, and must 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 orientation of the new Undergraduate Study Programme

The profile and the orientation of the Programme within the scientific field of the Department, which 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 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, capabilities or weaknesses specific to its internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reasons for selecting the scientific field of the new Study Programme.

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the new Study Programme

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

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, offer and demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international Study Programmes in the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*
- *the assessment of the Study Programmes offered by the academic unit in terms of coverage of the breadth of its scientific field. More specifically, the necessity of the establishment of a new Undergraduate Study Programme over other alternatives, such as the reform of the existing Programme, should be adequately justified*
- *the differentiation of the proposed Programme from the existing Undergraduate Study Programme, as well as its contribution in the structure of the academic map, should be clearly presented.*

d. The sustainability of the new Undergraduate Study Programme

Mention must be made to the infrastructure, the human resources, the scheduled funding, the services and available resources in general provided by the academic unit and the Institution, as well as their allocation among the existing and the new Undergraduate Study Programmes. In particular, the following resources should be stated

- *educational and research infrastructure (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 possibilities 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-centred approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- **The available teaching staff:** *Table of the teaching staff including the subject area, assigned courses, and the current assignment of teaching in courses and teaching hours, in other study programmes of the Department in question or in other Departments.*
- **Learning outcomes:** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, and the acquired professional rights must be mentioned.*

f. The number of admitted students

- *The proposed number of admitted students per year, over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *The number of any vacancies that arose from the admitted students in the Department, during the last three years should be stated.*
- *Any similar Programmes/Departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed Study Programme should be mentioned.*

g. Research

- *The research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, the available human resources with the pertinent research experience and performance, etc.*

h. Quality assurance

- *The quality assurance policy and quality assurance target-setting should be stated, especially regarding the operation and continuous improvement of the new Study Programme, along with the performance of the existing Programme in the external quality assurance, based on its accreditation reports, the degree of compliance and the recommendations of the evaluation panel.*

Documentation/Annexes

- 1.1 Explanatory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points (a) to (h) with the necessary documentation
- 1.2 Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution including its proposed academic restructure, in view of the planned operation of the new Undergraduate Study Programme (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)
- 1.3 Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new Undergraduate Study Programme
- 1.4 Four-year business plan for the operation of the new Undergraduate Study Programme
- 1.5 Table of the teaching staff of the Department(or the Departments, in the case of an interdepartmental USP), in line with the requirements of the criterion (e)

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 Undergraduate Study Programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals towards their continuous development and improvement.

In particular

The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented with the involvement of all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new Undergraduate Study programme (USP) 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 USP, realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG), also in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.1.1 Quality Assurance Policy for the USP
- 2.2.2 Quality Targeting for the USP (using the SMART methodology)

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

Institutions should design the new Undergraduate Study Programmes (USP) 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 USP design. The above details, as well as information on the USP 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 Undergraduate Study Programmes, the objectives, the subject areas, their 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 and literacy in artificial intelligence 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, the 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.

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.2.1 Senate decision for the establishment of the USP
- 2.2.2 Draft Curriculum of the new USP (including special reference to courses for the acquisition of digital skills/literacy in artificial intelligence)
- 2.2.3 USP Student Guide
- 2.2.4 Course syllabi
- 2.2.5 Table of the teaching staff of the new USP (name list including subject area, employment relationship, assignment of teaching in the USP and other study programmes)
- 2.2.6 QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new Undergraduate Study Programme and its compliance with the current Standards

2.3. STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

Institutions should ensure that the new Undergraduate Study 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-centred learning and teaching, the academic unit

- ✓ *respects and attends to the diversity of the students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths*
- ✓ *investigates the students' background knowledge and adopts teaching accordingly*
- ✓ *considers and uses different modes of teaching where appropriate*
- ✓ *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods which promote active learning*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of teaching, learning and assessment 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 by the teaching staff*
- ✓ *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship, thus creating a spirit of trust*
- ✓ *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints*

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.3.1 Sample questionnaires for assessment by the students
- 2.3.2 Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals
- 2.3.3 Regulation for the function of the academic advisor
- 2.3.4 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 UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

In particular

All the issues from the beginning to the end of the Undergraduate Study Programmes (USP) 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*
- ✓ *the procedure for the support of the newly admitted students*
- ✓ *students' rights and obligations, and monitoring of students' 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*
- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic units 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. Graduates 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 (degree and diploma supplement).

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

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.4.1 Internal regulation for the operation of the new USP (Senate decision)
- 2.4.2 Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments
- 2.4.3 Degree template, diploma supplement template

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, 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).

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.

Documentation/Annexes

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

2.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Institutions 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 infrastructure 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 internal rules of procedure. 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.

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.6.1 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.)
- 2.6.2 Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)
- 2.6.3 Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the services available to them

2.7 COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION FOR THE ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Institutions and their academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analysing and using information, aimed at the efficient management of USP 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 Undergraduate Study Programmes relate to the key performance indicators which, during the initial accreditation, must be entered as data pertaining to the profile of the academic unit and the structure of the USP.

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.7.1 Initial report from the Registry of Institutions
- 2.7.2 Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the Study Programme (Students' Record)
- 2.7.3 Other tools and procedures designed for the collection of data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the USP

2.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY 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 Study Programmes 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, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.

Documentation/Annexes

- 2.8.1 Dedicated segment on the website of the academic unit for the promotion of the new Undergraduate Study Programme
- 2.8.2 Bilingual (Greek and English) version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information
- 2.8.3 Procedure the for website maintenance and update

2.9 PERIODIC INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE 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 Undergraduate Study Programmes, so as to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and potential 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 Undergraduate 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 curriculum 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 of studies; 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.

Documentation/Annexes

2.9.1 Procedure for the evaluation, potential revision and update of the curriculum or the structure of the USP

2.9.2 Feedback process of the quality targeting of the new USP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)

2.10 INITIAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

New Undergraduate Study Programmes should undergo initial external evaluation by panels of external experts set by the HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by the HAHE.

In particular

The HAHE is responsible for administrating the initial accreditation process for the USP, which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. The HAHE grants accreditation of the Undergraduate Study Programme, based on the Report submitted by the panels, with a specific term of validity, following to which re-accreditation is required. The initial accreditation of the quality of the USP acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the Undergraduate Study Programme with the current 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/Annexes

2.10.1 Procedure for the external evaluation of the new USP