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Accreditation Report for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Food Quality and Safety Management Systems

Department: Food Science and Human Nutrition

Institution: Agricultural University of Athens

Date: 26 October 2024



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
Κοινωνική Συνοχή

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Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of
the New Postgraduate Study Programme of **Food Quality and Safety**
Management Systems of the **Agricultural University of Athens** for the
purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new postgraduate study programme of **Food Quality and Safety Management Systems** of the **Agricultural University of Athens** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. Assoc. Prof. Amalia Tsiami (Chair)

University of West London, United Kingdom

2. Dr. Demetrios Kazantzis

Del's Lemonade and Refreshments Inc., United States of America

3. Prof. George Manganaris

Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

4. Assoc. Prof. Anastasios Papageorgiou

University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University, Finland

5. Mr. Yannis Chatzieffraimidis

PhD Candidate, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The members of the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) for the review of the new postgraduate study programme of MSc Food Quality and Safety Management Systems of the Agricultural University of Athens were appointed by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) of the Register of Independent Experts on 30 September 2024, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020.

EEAP reviewed all documents supplied (which we, as Panel's member, already pre-read and listed below in tabulated form) and agreed on key questions and issues to focus on during our evaluation.

- A0 Table of content of the documents
- A1 Proposal for the Academic Certification of the new postgraduate programme of study
- A2 Decision of the Senate on the establishment of the new postgraduate programme
- A3 MODIP report
- A4 Senate decision of Strategic planning of the Institute for the subject of new postgraduate programmes
- A5 The Institutional strategy for postgraduate studies Feasibility & viability study of the new postgraduate programme
- A6 Quality policy for the creation and development of the postgraduate study
- A7 Quality Targeting of the academic unit for the new postgraduate study
- A8 Course Study Guide
- A9 Course outline
- A10 List of names of teaching staff
- A11 Internal regulation of the new Programme of Studies
- A12 Regulation regarding studies, practical training, mobility, assignment writing.
- A13 Regulations for the operation of the students' complaints and objections management mechanism
- A14 Regulations for the operation of the institution of academic counsellor
- A15 Regulations of the ethics and research
- A16 Diploma Supplement Template in Greek and English language
- A17 Summarised information on the academic staff achievements
- A18 Specification of the online learning or distance learning
- A19 Plan on the way that the income from the Master's would be used.

The EEAP received adequate, in number and content, information to support its duties as evaluators and after reviewing all the content provided as well as all sectors of the MSc in of MSc Food Quality and Safety Management Systems of the Agricultural University of Athens. The first day of the online meeting started on Monday 30 September 2024 at 16.00 (all times refer to Greek time).

The e-meetings dealt with all 4 PSPs under evaluation.

- The first meeting was with
 - the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP,

- the Head of the Department,
- the Director of the PSP EEAP

Prof. Emmanouil Flemetakis, Vice Rector/President of MODIP

Prof. Ioanna Mantala, Head of the Department

Prof. Petros Tarantilis, Director Study and Valorization of Natural Products

Prof. Stamatina Kallithraka, Director Oenology-Technology of Alcoholic Beverage

Prof. Efstathios Panagou, Director Food Quality and Safety Managements Systems

Prof. Maria Kapsokefalou, Director Food and Nutrition

They presented a brief and comprehensive overview of the postgraduate programmes: academic profile, status, strengths and possible areas of concern. The degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation was discussed.

The EEAP had individual meetings with the teaching members of staff, discussing professional development opportunities, mobility, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, workload, evaluation by students, the link between teaching and research, the teaching staff involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the programme; possible areas of weakness

The Food Quality and Safety Managements Systems teaching staff members were:

- Prof. Eleftherios Drosinos
- Asst. Prof. Konstantinos Papadimitriou
- Prof. Georgios Papadopoulos
- Prof. Panagiotis Skandamis
- Assoc. Prof. Nikolaos Chorianopoulos

On-line tour was provided including the classrooms, lecture hall, library and laboratory facilities, followed by discussion on the plans developing further the facilities.

The EEAP members had a brief meeting with employers, social partners associated with the activities of the specific master course as per previous postgraduate study.

- Dr. Nikolaos Grivokostopoulos, Quality assurance manager, Coca Cola Hellas
- Dr. Ioannis Mytilineos, R&D Manager, GIOTIS S.A.
- Dr. Stavros Manios, R&D Manager, Paliria S.A.

The EEAP had a private meeting to discuss the findings.

- Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector, the Director of the PSP1, the Head of the Department, MODIP Manager EEAP, Vice-Rector, Director of the PSP1, Head of the Department, MODIP Manager
- Prof. Emmanouil Flemetakis, Vice Rector/President of MODIP
- Prof. Ioanna Mantala, Head of the Department
- Prof. Efstathios Panagou, Director of Food Quality and Safety Managements Systems
- Mrs. Alexandra Ntouka, MODIP Manager

The EEAP had a private meeting to discuss the main findings, followed by a Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector, the Head of the Department and the Directors of the four PSPs. Mrs. Alexandra Ntouka, MODIP Manager, has also attended the closure meeting and her contribution to provide in a timely fashion all additional material requested was acknowledged. The entire process was contacted in a great spirit of collaboration. The staff was helpful and honest of the issues of the programme, and they were very much willing to supplement information with whatever we had requested to access.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) is the third-oldest university in Greece. It was established in 1920 (Law 1844/1920) as an Independent Higher Education Institute with university status under the name of the Highest Agricultural School of Athens (H.A.S.A.). In 1989, the H.A.S.A. was renamed the Agricultural University of Athens and organized into seven independent academic departments (Presidential Decree 377/1989) and although its Greek title was modified in 1995 (Presidential Decree 226/1995).

Currently, there are six departments:

- School of Plant Sciences,
- School of Animal Biosciences,
- School of Environmental and Agricultural Engineering,
- School of Applied Biology and Biotechnology
- School of Applied Economics and Social Sciences
- School of Food and Nutritional Sciences

The Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition belongs to the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences, offers to the students the scientific background to scientific and technological issues in the food area. The department promotes the existing knowledge in Food Science and Human Nutrition through research and development programmes conducted in collaboration with other national and international Universities and Research institutions, as well as with research and development departments of small and large Greek food industries.

The department's objectives are as follows:

- Educate scientists to have a solid background in science, technology and economics that will enable them to progress professionally at food industry and stakeholders in the private or public sector.
- Contribute to the development of Food Science and Technology through scientific research and training of researchers.
- Share scientific knowledge with Food Industries by establishing collaboration projects between the University and the industries.

The Department is equipped with the following laboratories that are used in teaching and research:

- Laboratory of Dairy Research
- Laboratory of Oenology and Alcoholic Drinks
- Laboratory of Food Chemistry & Analysis
- Laboratory of Food Process Engineering
- Laboratory of Food Microbiology and Biotechnology
- Laboratory of Food Quality Control & Hygiene
- Laboratory of General Chemistry

The Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition currently offers three post-graduate programmes, namely:

- MSc in Food Science and Technology
- MSc in Current Food Technology, with two options
- Dairy Science & Technology
- Oenology
- MSc in Food, Nutrition and Health

The Department also offers two- postgraduate studies in collaboration with other Universities:

- MSc in integrated Production Management of Milk and Dairy Products
- MBA in Food and Agriculture

The Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition of AUA is committed to provide high-quality education to its students in relevant scientific fields, as well as to developing a creative environment of research and work for its staff. It is a strategic choice of administration, and responsibility is achieved through the continual improvement of teaching and research work, with the cooperation of academic, research, teaching, technical, and administrative staff.

The vision of the Department is to continue advancing educational, research, cultural, and broader social objectives, with a commitment to scientific ethics, accountability, sustainable development, and social cohesion.

The Department has implemented a quality assurance policy in alignment with the legal and regulatory framework governing AUA. Through the continuous review, redesign, and refinement of this policy, the Department strives for even higher levels of performance. This approach aims to achieve the highest standards, contributing to the University's pursuit of excellence in education and research and supporting the country's sustained path towards genuine development.

The quality assurance policy of the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition is an integral component of the University's overall strategy. The development and application of this policy encompass not only established structures and procedures but also active engagement of all personnel.

The policy and its implementation strategy are overseen and monitored by the Internal Evaluation Group, in close collaboration with the University's Quality Assurance Unit.

To ensure and constantly improve the quality of its educational and research work, as well as the efficient and effective function of its services, the Department complies with the criteria defined in Article 72.2 of the 4009/2011 national law.

Those criteria mainly support:

- Organizing the internal system of quality assurance in the Department o Both head and staff of the Department taking responsibility and assuming their role regarding the quality assurance process

- Preserving academic principles and ethics, preventing discrimination and encouraging the involvement of external agencies with the quality assurance process
- Constantly ameliorating the learning and teaching process, constantly rewarding research and innovation
- Assuring the quality of the Undergraduate Study Programme and its compliance to the special standard of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency
- Efficiently organizing departmental services, developing and conserving departmental infrastructure. Effectively providing and managing necessary material and financial resources
- Developing and rational allocating human resources within the Department

The Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition has set three main strategic goals that refer to key quality objectives:

1. Assuring Excellence in Learning and Teaching through –
 - Increasing the number of active students i.e. their performance and efficiency
 - Reducing the average duration of studies until graduation
 - Improving the learning – teaching process
 - Enhancing student-centered learning
 - Continually improving the re-assessing the Undergraduate Study Programme
2. Assuring Excellence in Research through –
 - Increasing the research performance of the departmental academic staff
 - Increasing research recognition
 - Enhancing collaboration with both Greek and foreign universities aiming at the diffusion of research projects and wider synergies
 - Utilizing alternative financial resources (sponsorship/ donations, self-financed programmes of study, participation in international programmes) for research purposes
3. Assuring Internationalisation and Extroversion through –
 - Growing programmes of intra-national cooperation such as Erasmus and IAESTE, aiming at increasing the number of both incoming and outgoing students and academic staff members.
 - Developing synergies with other Departments of the University and other Greek Universities in terms of both undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes
 - Improving the connection of the Department to the labour market and the academic staff members and graduates' collaboration with research, scientific and cultural bodies
 - Moreover, the Department aims at:
 - Continual improvement the working conditions for all staff, as well as resolving issues of infrastructure (buildings, laboratory spaces, scientific equipment etc.)
 - Rationalizing and abbreviating procedures regarding administrative work
 - Offering Life-long Learning Programmes in scientific fields that relate to Food Science and Human Nutrition
 - Establishing a graduates' network with the help of which it will achieve its academic and social goals.

- Contributing to the University's effort to achieve a high position within the World University Ranking
- Reducing pollution and environmental burden caused by its operation, in cooperation with the University
- Organizing and implementing activities for direct and indirect support of socially vulnerable groups of people

The specific master's degree in Food Quality and Safety Management Systems objectives are:

- To provide specialised and up-to-date knowledge and skills to scientists with previous experience in food science, as well as scientists from other fields of knowledge,
- To ensure a professional or research career in the field of quality assurance and food safety.

The aim of the MSc is to promote scientific knowledge on issues related to safety, quality, hygiene, legislation, microbiology, and quality and food safety management systems.

The learning outcomes are to:

- Describe and explain the behaviour of microorganisms in food and organise and evaluate classical and modern techniques for enumerating the microbiological load in food.
- Organise and evaluate rapid and non-invasive methods of instrumental analysis in the assessment of microbiological quality of food.
- Integrate molecular and omic techniques into food quality management systems.
- Evaluate the production process to improve food quality and safety and implement corrective actions.
- Design and carry out audits to evaluate quality management systems and food safety and apply methods and tools of statistical quality control.
- Carry out internal audits for the implementation of quality management systems and security in the primary and secondary sectors.
- Reproduce the requirements of quality and safety standards.

There are six academics that are teaching at this master course, 4 at the level of Professor, one at the level of Associate Professor and one Senior lecturer.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE PSP OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

By decision/s of the Institutional Senate, the Institutions should adapt their strategy to allow for the provision of postgraduate study programmes, in addition to attending to the profile, vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Institution. In this strategy, the Institutions should anticipate the potential benefits, difficulties or risks from the implementation of new postgraduate study programmes and plan all the necessary actions to achieve their goals. The Institution's strategic choices should be documented through specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new postgraduate study programmes.

In the case of PSP delivered by distance methods, the Institution prepares and applies an e-learning strategy. The Institution's e-learning strategy is integrated into its overall strategy and identifies educational goals while keeping up to the rapid technological changes and to the developments in pedagogical models. The Institution should include in its strategy the justification and feasibility as to why e-learning has been selected as the appropriate learning strategy for the particular programmes of study where it is applied.

In the context of e-learning, innovation strategies, the possibility of programme revision, the linking between learning and research (requiring knowledge of the latest innovations in order to select the most appropriate means to achieve the learning outcomes) should be taken into account.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit for postgraduate study programmes should be in line with the Institution's strategy and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the postgraduate study programmes offered by the academic unit. Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to implement this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a. *the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes*
- b. *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7*
- c. *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP*

- d. *the appropriateness of the qualifications and the availability of the teaching staff for the PSP*
- e. *the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP*
- f. *the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labour market*
- g. *the quality of support services, such as administrative services, the libraries, and the student welfare office for the PSP*
- h. *the efficient utilisation of the financial resources of the PSP that may be drawn from tuition fees*
- i. *the conduct of an annual internal review and audit of the quality assurance system for the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Director and the Faculty involved in the PSP entitled 'Food Quality and Safety Management Systems' presented a comprehensive and robust postgraduate programme that includes two semesters with courses (30 ECTS each) while the 3rd semester is allocated for practical exercise (12 ECTS) and the preparation and defence of the MSc thesis (18 ECTS). The facilities and the inventory, presented through a well-articulated video is expected to offer to the MSc students a thorough hands-on practice. Overall, the learning outcomes of the PSP are considered appropriate for level 7, according to the European and National Qualifications Framework.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit includes a commitment of the academic unit for its implementation and the efficient use of PSP financial resources.

The academic unit has set a number of specific and measurable goals regarding the post-graduate study programme, and especially in respect of teaching methods and student satisfaction paired with suitable key performance indicators. Specific goals towards learning outcomes and research outputs (i.e. publications in refereed journal or presentations in Conferences per MSc student) are missing. This is a shortcoming.

All members of MODIP and Academic staff were particularly positive and passionate about working beyond the line of duty to achieve excellence. This interaction is expected to additionally lead to enhanced AUA visibility and recognition within both national and international context.

The nature of the offered MSc programme provides incentives for fruitful collaboration with the food industry and other professional bodies and communities. The graduates of this PSP are expected to substantially enhance their competencies and seek a position of professional maturity.

II. Analysis

A highly impactful post-graduate programmes that receives considerably higher number of applications compared to the offered positions.

Outstanding or Significant research outputs by the totality of the faculty involved in the PSP.

Well-equipped labs that at certain cases include modern and state-of-the-art facilities with significant student hands-on experience.

The EEAP is underlying the commitment that the academic team demonstrated as well as MODIP and further committees within the University.

Student-centred teaching methods bridging in-class knowledge with research.

The provision of this postgraduate study programme is expected to further enhance visibility of the Department of Food Science at Agricultural University of Athens within an international context.

The outline of the modules needs to be amended and provide a more clear and coherent manner activities linked to hands-on experience.

The list of participating units in the practical exercise was not provided.

III. Conclusions

The Panel would require overviewing the recommendations to achieve the highest quality at this postgraduate study.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R1.1 Upon official accreditation of the PSP, the Quality Assurance Policy has to/should be uploaded into the newly developed website and to be sufficiently communicated to all

interested parties (BSc students, graduates, stakeholders, etc) through emails and social media (LinkedIn).

R1.2 The quality of the teaching has to/should be monitored by the provision of electronic and anonymous questionnaire to the MSc students, in relation to the subject taught and the resources provided as well as the performance of the academic staff. Such results to be evaluated in a yearly basis by the Director of the PSP together with the MOPDIP and the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs

R1.3 The PSP programme has to/should include a number of specific and measurable goals towards learning outcomes and research outputs (i.e. publications in refereed journal or presentations in Conferences per MSc student) and means to inform the alumnae and other potential interested parties from other Academic Units for enrolment to the cur-rent programme.

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).

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The new Post Graduate programme (PGP) on 'Food Quality and Safety Management Systems' has been approved by the University's senate (decision no. 4410/20.06.2023) following official procedures by the institution. It is a continuation of an earlier PG course (Food Science and Technology) at the Department of Food Science and Technology (FST). The new PGP is supported by Laboratory of Food Microbiology and Biotechnology και Food Quality Control and Hygiene. It offers specialised training in the basic and up-to-date knowledge required for proper training in the field of food quality and safety and aims to fill a learning gap in training needs in modern methods of microbiological analysis, risk analysis, relevant food legislation, standards and inspection of management systems, and the application of molecular technologies in food quality assessment.

The existing MSc courses in the country do not show a perfect relevance between the courses of the proposed PGP, as no current PGPs deal thoroughly with quality management systems and food safety.

The PGP's new study guide is considered desirable and necessary to reflect the changes that have taken place within the department and to consider the needs-comments of the students as reflected in the evaluations during the operation of the previous PSP. At the same time, the new PSP has been designed to reflect the strategy of the AUA and the department to contribute to the development of the Greek economy and the scientific advancement of young scientists.

External stakeholders from the labour market and graduates contributed to the design of the new PGP.

The structure of the study programme is rational, coherent, and clearly articulated. The printed Student Guide is complete, concise, and appropriate and offers basic information about the Department and in particular the postgraduate programme. The courses are taught by a teaching staff of 5. The offered courses are well connected to the research interests and activities of the teaching staff.

The expected learning outcomes are in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF) and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. The PSP consists of 3 semesters, totalling 90 ECTS. The first semester includes the attendance of 5 compulsory courses and one (1) cycle of seminars, which correspond to a total of thirty (30) ECTS. The second semester includes the attendance of four (6) compulsory courses, and one (1) cycle of seminars. The third semester of studies (30 ECTS) includes the preparation and writing of the master's Thesis (18 ECTS) and a two-month Practical Training (12 ECTS) that provides working experience to students.

II. Analysis

The proposed PSP in "Food Quality and Safety Management Systems" is a well-designed PSP serving the needs of an important, complicated, and increasingly demanding sector. From its conception to its final development, the PSP organizing committee, and its director followed

a defined process involving social partners, external advisers, academics, and former graduates to create a mature and interesting study programme.

The PSP should be open to incorporate more content on topics with potential future growth and importance in the food sector and keep up to date with new developments and technologies.

Detailed course descriptions have been provided clearly stating detailed content, learning outcomes and skills expected to be acquired by students, the organization of the lectures and methods of delivery, the supporting structure of the learning processes, and the assessment methods. The language is Greek, and the thesis can be written either in Greek or English. Adopting the English language in some lectures and seminars could further enhance the PSP.

There is no clear framework for student assessment of teaching staff beyond vague descriptions of teaching assessment. It would have been informative for the external assessment committee to see a draft of the proposed teaching evaluation surveys that would be distributed to students and/or some evidence of peer review of teaching.

III. Conclusions

EAP considers that this new PSP is fully compliant regarding design and approval. The recommendations of the Panel are advisory in order to facilitate the continuous pursuit of improvement and excellence. Clear connections in place with partners and establishment of a formal framework for periodical revisions are needed.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R2.1 Introduce mid-term exams or other evaluation activities (quizzes etc.) that could count to the final grade of the courses and offer better engagement of the students.

R2.2 Introduce a mechanism/s to ensure high participation of students to the evaluation of the teaching staff (e.g., include it as one of the obligations of the students; couple it to the release of the course grade etc.).

R2.3 Ensure that there is continuous feedback from stakeholders and graduates. Establish a mechanism (an informal advisory board) of regular meetings and not ad hoc conversations that usually take place during invited talks.

R2.4 Implement an internal peer-review scheme of teaching between the teaching staff.

R2.5 Create a functional, detailed, and informative web site (in Greek and English). Links to detailed CVs of the teaching staff and quality indicators (Scopus, Google Scholar etc.).

R2.6 Include courses on innovation, business set-up etc.

R2.7 Consider offering teaching also in English in case of foreign students and include this possibility in the study guides.

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, THESIS DRAFTING, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

The Institution should develop and publish the internal regulations prescribed by law which, among other things, should regulate all issues of postgraduate studies from the beginning to the end of the studies.

Indicatively:

- *The students' admission procedures and the required supporting documents*
- *Student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- *Internship issues, if applicable, and granting of scholarships*
- *The procedures and terms for the drafting of assignments and the thesis*
- *The procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and for the assurance of the progress of students in their studies*
- *The terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

In case that the PSP is offered through distance learning methods, the Institution should have in place a regulation for e-learning, including in particular the following issues:

- *Services of the Institution to support e-learning*
- *Methodology for the development and implementation of courses*
- *Ways of providing teaching and variety of teaching and assessment modes*
- *General standard of course structure*
- *Student support system*
- *Support of faculty/teachers with mandatory e-learning training for new staff members*
- *Technological infrastructures made available by the Institution*
- *Student identity confirmation system (student identity check, assignment and exam writing process, security and certification issues).*
- ❖ *The Institution should establish rules for the provision of appropriate access and for the assurance of the participation of students affected by disability, illness, and other special circumstances.*
- ❖ *Ethical issues, such as those concerning data protection, intellectual property rights and rules for protection against fraud are governed by the e-learning regulation.*

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Agricultural University of Athens, School of Food and Nutrition Sciences and the newly proposed master's programme of Food Quality and Safety Management Systems is located in Athens, Greece.

The proposed PSP in the Food Quality and Safety Management System has set objectives in promoting the scientific knowledge related to issues of high food quality, food safety, delivering a healthy, wholesome, food supply with quality assurance in mind. Also, food production processes, implementation of corrective actions prevention from adulteration, delivering authenticated food products, techniques in food quality and safety management systems according to food quality and safety management standards and regulations. In addition, design and carry out audits in food quality and safety in the food industry.

Graduates of the PSP will develop skills in various fields of Food Processing and Food Preservation and being able to apply their knowledge in all areas of high food quality and deliver a safe food supply to the consumer.

The teaching faculty consists of 5 well qualified educators in their respective fields of specialization. Also, the new department will be supported by teaching staff by other members of the academic departments of the Agricultural University of Athens.

The admission and selection criteria allow not more than five students per year that hold an undergraduate degree in a related area, from Greece or equivalent studies abroad.

The language of studies is Greek, and the application process include a copy of degree, a detailed C.V., two letters of recommendation, a certificate of foreign language proficiency, and a minimum grade of 6, along with a personal interview and some relevant professional experience. All students must comply with basic principles of ethics without deviation or exception.

II. Analysis

The M.Sc. in Quality Management Systems and Food Safety implements set targets for quality assurance, carries out the annual internal evaluation of the proposed study curriculum, collects data, disseminates all related information and implements its external evaluation procedures according to required standards established by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education.

The master's degree requires attendance of 3 academic semesters. The first two semesters require mandatory attendance, and the third semester is completed with a written research dissertation and practical training. Also, seminars and a two-month internship are required to complete the degree. The first semester includes attendance of 5 courses and seminars for 30 (ECTS). The second semester includes six compulsory courses and seminars for 30 (ECTS) in total. The third semester includes a thesis for 24 (ECTS) and the practical training for 6 (ECTS) for a total of 30 (ECTS). The duration of each academic semester is thirteen weeks.

Scholarships are awarded according to the needs of incoming applicants or a proven exceptional or current academic record.

An academic advisor is assigned to each student that supports and guides the student for a successful completion of their academic studies and any other needs relating to acquiring their degree.

All mobility actions under the ERASMUS Programme are coordinated by the European Programme office with relevant mobility opportunities. All ERASMUS mobility opportunities and procedures are available on the GEP website in Greek and English and also helps in locating an internship and/or postgraduate dissertation.

A meal card ensures free meals at the AUEB Restaurant to students in need. All other students can also eat with a small charge.

Postgraduate students that do not have any hospital or medical care are entitled to full medical and hospital care under the National Health System (NHS).

III. Conclusions

The above Principle 3 fully complies with the requirements according to the specific guidelines and directions provided by HAHE.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section of the report.

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.

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The faculty use a variety of teaching tools and pedagogical methods. According to EEAP the course teaching material (.ppt presentations) will be available online through the e-class platform.

The faculty's average teaching load has been taken into account and all of them expressed high degree of commitment towards their additional teaching load for the new postgraduate programme, in a similar manner that the previous postgraduate study was operating. Faculty was satisfied with the previous workload.

The teaching faculty includes five highly qualified educators specializing in their respective fields. Additional support will be provided by teaching staff from other academic departments at the Agricultural University of Athens.

II. Analysis

Faculty access to facilities, laboratory equipment, and mobility programmes is adequate. The staff expressed commitment and engagement with the students to support them to progress professional development.

III. Conclusions

The teaching staff express its commitment towards the implementation of the new MSc programme. Their research profiles are decent and/or of high quality for some cases.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section of the report.

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.

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP in “Food Quality and Safety Management Systems” provides a structured, high-quality educational experience, offering in-person courses with mandatory attendance. Faculty members from the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) lead the teaching (at 85-90%), supported by weekly seminars delivered by guest academics and industry professionals from both Greece and abroad. This comprehensive PSP spans three semesters, equivalent to 90 ECTS credits. The first two semesters consist of compulsory courses—five in the first semester and six in the second—accompanied by seminars. The third semester is dedicated to the master’s Thesis, which carries 24 ECTS credits, and a two-month Practical Training worth 6 ECTS, providing students with essential hands-on experience. The programme accepts up to 30 students each academic year, and if fewer than six students are enrolled, the Department Assembly will consider whether to proceed with that year's intake.

At the end of the first semester, a presentation is made to students by the laboratories to help them choose thesis topics based on the needs of each lab.

The PSP is supported by five faculty members (DEP) and five Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), who possess the necessary academic qualifications and actively engage in research. Students

benefit from access to state-of-the-art research facilities at AUA, particularly the Laboratories of Food Microbiology and Biotechnology and Food Quality Control and Hygiene. These laboratories are equipped with advanced tools essential for research and hands-on learning, including Pulse Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE), Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), Real-time PCR systems, etc. This integration of modern equipment ensures that the programme fosters a comprehensive and applied learning environment.

Administrative support for the PSP is provided by the programme's Secretariat, ensuring smooth operations, including course registration, grade management, and the handling of tuition fees. The programme also benefits from institutional resources, such as the Central Library and Information Centre, which offers daily access to study spaces, lending services, and a wide array of digital resources. Students have access to a variety of additional services that enhance their overall academic and personal experience. The Career Office supports students with job placement and professional networking, while InnovinAgri promotes innovation and entrepreneurship. The university also provides psychological counselling and health services, contributing to student well-being.

Furthermore, students can make use of various campus facilities, including the university's central library, which provides reading rooms and access to academic journals and electronic databases. Other resources include a student restaurant, gym, athletic spaces, and a range of services that support students with disabilities. While these services are typically available to undergraduate students, they are also accessible to postgraduate students, ensuring a well-rounded and supportive environment.

Despite the extensive academic and administrative support, certain challenges remain. The lack of dedicated student housing and a programme-specific website could hinder recruitment and the overall student experience. Additionally, participation in the Erasmus+ programme, while encouraged, has been limited.

To further support students in their academic journey, the programme has recently introduced except from supervisor and academic advisors for each student, ensuring personalized guidance on academic matters. A Student Ombudsman is available to also help resolve disputes between students and university faculty or administration, while the Gender Equality Committee promotes inclusivity and works to combat discrimination within the university. Despite these strong support systems, it is important to note that there is no student dormitory associated with the programme. Nevertheless, students have access to recreational activities, including cultural and athletic programmes, to help enrich their student life.

The annual budget for operating the PSP, based on an intake of 10 students (with a minimum of 5 students required for programme viability), is estimated at €28,000. Of this, 2.5% is allocated to human resources, covering salaries for teaching staff, the secretariat, and other support personnel. Up to 30% of the total enrolled students each year may be exempt from tuition fees. The tuition fee is set at €4,000, payable in three instalments, as outlined in the programme's study regulations. The budget allocation primarily covers personnel costs, equipment, and consumables necessary for the programme's teaching and research activities.

Additional funds are allocated for disseminating students' research results. In cases where there is a budget surplus at the end of the academic year, it is carried over to the next year and distributed according to the needs of the PSP.

Scholarships available, funded by 1% of the PSP's net revenues, and will be awarded to students who demonstrate academic excellence. However, these scholarships do not offer tuition fee exemptions.

Currently, there are no dedicated websites for this particular master's programme, only a general site for the university.

II. Analysis

The Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) "Food Quality and Safety Management Systems" offers a comprehensive academic curriculum, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience. It effectively combines the expertise of five faculty members (DEP) and five Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), all of whom are highly qualified and engaged in research. This ensures a strong academic foundation for students. The programme is further enriched by advanced laboratory facilities, providing students access to cutting-edge research equipment and technologies, such as PCR, real-time PCR, 2D-SDS-PAGE, LC-MS-MS, and FT-IR, essential for their training in food quality and safety.

The administrative and student support services, including the programme's Secretariat, the Central Library, InnovinAgri, and the Career Office, contribute to the seamless functioning of the programme. However, a potential issue arises from the shared administrative support within the department, which could limit the programme's ability to meet the growing needs of both students and faculty effectively. Furthermore, the lack of a dedicated dormitory may pose challenges for students from outside Athens, impacting their overall experience.

Financially, the programme's budget, based on a minimum of 10 students per intake, appears to be sustainable. With €28,000 allocated annually, 2.5% is dedicated to staff salaries, while the remainder covers operational costs, including research and educational resources. Notably, up to 30% of students may be exempt from tuition fees, which promotes inclusivity, though the overall impact on the programme's financial sustainability should be closely monitored. The scholarships offered, funded by 1% of the programme's net revenue, are a positive addition but do not provide exemptions from tuition fees.

While student services such as psychological counselling, health services, and athletic facilities are in place to enhance student well-being, participation in programmes like Erasmus+ has been relatively low, limiting students' exposure to international opportunities. Additionally, despite the strong academic framework, a more robust digital presence—such as a dedicated website for the PSP—would provide better access to programme information and increase its visibility to prospective students.

III. Conclusions

The "Food Quality and Safety Management Systems" PSP is well-structured and supported by highly qualified academic staff and state-of-the-art research facilities. It provides a balanced blend of theoretical coursework and practical training, equipping students with the skills needed in the food industry. Some aspects of the programme, particularly administrative capacity and student support services, need improvement to ensure that the programme remains responsive to the needs of its students and faculty.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R5.1. Consider establishing a formal external Advisory Board comprised of external faculty, graduates, and social partners to actively assist and guide the continuous review, revision, and further development of the PSP curriculum, enhance the entire programme, as well as attract external resources.

R5.2. Encourage greater participation in Erasmus+ and other international programmes by providing more information and support to students, fostering international exposure and collaboration.

R5.3. While the scholarship scheme is commendable, expanding tuition fee exemptions or offering more robust financial aid packages could further increase access for students from diverse economic backgrounds, enhancing inclusivity.

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.

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The proposed PSP was presented to the accreditation committee in a detailed, lengthy plan, in an allocated short time, but it met all the necessary requirements of the standards for a quality programme for incoming new students.

The workload agrees with National and International requirements for a master's degree programme with mandatory lecture schedule and lab attendance, seminars, internship and contacts for continued education and/or work. Courses in related subjects include microbiological techniques, food quality and safety standards, plant and personal hygiene, emerging technologies, and food quality audits.

II. Analysis

The new PGP will be supported by 5 experienced faculty professors and 4 members of EDIP with lengthy experience in lab teaching. Also, faculty from the Agricultural University of Athens will teach in the new department. All faculty members present expressed the importance of both internal and external evaluation and accreditation of the new M.Sc. programme. The faculty is open to suggestions and invite any constructive recommendations and proposals.

All attending stakeholders confirmed their interest in participating in the internal and external evaluation of the PSP, and they volunteered their services and time for any upcoming events.

The proposed programme has not recently undergone any external reviews. The postgraduate students' workload and level of knowledge through attending all mandatory coursework, labs, seminars, practicum, internship and writing and defending a thesis in front of a faculty committee can well prepare them in the area of Food Quality and Food Safety.

The student coursework is adequate according to National, European and International Standards for a PSP including a minimum grade of 6 for entering the programme and a minimum grade of 6 for graduating the programme. It also includes restrictions for duration of studies and mandatory attendance of lectures, labs, seminars, and internship.

The expectations of the students and their suggestions about the programme has to be taken into consideration after the first graduating class complete their degrees.

III. Conclusions

Principle 6 for a Master's degree in Food Quality and Food Safety fully meets the requirements in accordance with the specific guidelines and directions provided by HAHE.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R 6.1 In addition to internal reviews, schedule regular external evaluations involving industry experts to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and up to date.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- A highly impactful post-graduate programmes that receives considerably higher number of applications compared to the offered positions.
- Significant research outputs by all Faculty members involved in the PSP.
- Well-equipped labs that at certain cases include modern and state-of-the-art facilities with significant student hands-on experience.
- The EEAP is underlying the commitment that the academic team demonstrated as well as MODIP and further committees within the University.
- Student-centred teaching methods bridging in-class knowledge with research.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The outline of the modules needs to be amended and provide in a more clear and coherent manner activities linked to hands on experience.
- No mechanism for continuous feedback from stakeholders and graduates.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- All relevant files of the PSP to be uploaded into the newly developed website once the programme will be officially accredited.
- To set up a questionnaire both for the employee and the MSc student who is conducting the practical exercise in the 3rd semester.
- To establish a Board member from the pool of stakeholders to offer consultancy in the curriculum and future Programme developments
- References in the Course Outlines could be written in a more uniform way and 'Learning Outcomes' to be phrased in a more specific and 'countable' way.
- Establish an alumni association to keep track of graduates' career progression, encourage mentorship, and create networking opportunities for current students' annual evaluation should be disseminated through the website and mailing lists to students, alumni, and stakeholders.
- To establish a risk analysis and mitigation strategy for the practical exercise of the MSc students regarding (i) identification of the host organization and (ii) satisfactory surveys for both parts (MSc student and Host Organization) and mitigation measures where the results are not those that were expected.
- Introduce optional industry-relevant topics in the curriculum, such as food quality predictive modelling and sustainable production practices.?
- Move the presentation of laboratory thesis topics to the beginning of the first semester. This adjustment will allow students to explore potential research areas early on, make more informed decisions about their thesis topics, and align their course selections with their research interests.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None**

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

- 1. Assoc. Prof. Amalia Tsiami (Chair)**
- 2. Dr. Demetrios Kazantzis**
- 3. Prof. George Manganaris**
- 4. Assoc. Prof. Anastasios Papageorgiou**
- 5. Mr. Yannis Chatzieffraimidis**