



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report **for the New Undergraduate Study Programme in** **operation of:**

Physiotherapy

Institution: University of Thessaly
Date: February 24 – March 3, 2025



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
Κοινωνική Συνοχή



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of
the Undergraduate Study Program of *Physiotherapy* of the University of
Thessaly 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 Undergraduate Study Program of *Physiotherapy* of the University of Thessaly comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. Prof. Konstantinos Pantopoulos (Chair)
McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada
2. Prof. Nikolaos Venizelos
Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden
3. Assoc. Prof. George Panayotou
European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
4. Ms. Evangelia Kentrou
Panhellenic Association of Physiotherapists, Athens, Greece
5. Mr. Konstantinos Rossis
Undergraduate Student, University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Please refer briefly to the Panel preparation for the new undergraduate study programme in operation review, as well as to the documentation provided and considered by the Panel. State the dates of the site visit and describe the visit schedule and the meetings held. Feel free to mention any additional information regarding the procedure, as appropriate.

The evaluation was carried out through reviews of documents, as well as online interviews with the Rector of Academic & Student Affairs and Quality Assurance of the University of Thessaly, the Chair of the Department of Physiotherapy, MODIP members, OMEA members, teaching staff, undergraduate students of the Department of Physiotherapy, alumni of the Department of Physiotherapy and external stakeholders. The panel previously reviewed all supplied documents. The meetings and discussions were conducted via teleconference over three days, between February 24-26, 2025. All supplied documents are outlined below:

1. Department Material

- B0. Contents of the Evaluation Dossier
- B1. Academic Accreditation Proposal
- B2. Explanatory Report
- B3. Updated Institutional Strategic Plan
- B4. Feasibility and Sustainability Study for the Department of Physiotherapy
- B5. Four-Year Business Plan for the Department of Physiotherapy
- B6. Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the University
- B7. Quality Assurance Policy of the Academic Unit
- B8. Quality Objectives of the University
- B9. Quality Objectives of the Academic Unit
- B10. Senate Decision on Establishment of the Undergraduate Study Program of the
Department of Physiotherapy
- B11.1 Study Guide
- B11.2 Detailed Study Guide
- B12. Course Outline of the Undergraduate Study Program
- B13. Digital Skills Courses of the Undergraduate Study Program
- B14. List with Names of Teaching Staff
- B15. MODIP Internal Evaluation Report
- B16. Course Evaluation Questionnaire
- B17. Regulations for Handling Student Complaints & Appeals

- B18. Regulations for the Operation of the Academic Advisor
- B19. Internal Operating Regulations
- B20.1 Academic Regulations
- B20.2 Practical Training Guide
- B20.3 Mobility Regulations (Erasmus)
- B20.4 Undergraduate Dissertation Guide
- B21.1 Diploma Supplement Template in Greek
- B21.2 Diploma Supplement Template in English
- B22. Departmental Chair's Certification for Diploma Supplement
- B23. Concise Report on Scientific Performance of Academic Staff
- B24. Reports of Data from the Integrated National Quality Information System 2020
- B25. Progress Report University of Thessaly
- B26.1 Publication Awards 2020-2021
- B26.2 Comprehensive Clinical Internship Guide of the Undergraduate Study Program
- B26.3 Guidelines for First-Year Students 2021
- B26.4 Guide for Contract Employees
- B26.5 Senate Decision for Establishment of Postgraduate Study Program (PSP) "Advanced Physiotherapy"
- B26.6 Senate Act on Regulations for PSP "Advanced Physiotherapy"
- B26.7 Study Guide for PSP "Advanced Physiotherapy"
- B26.8 Senate Decision on Regulations for PhD dissertation in Physiotherapy
- B26.9 Study Guide for PhD dissertation in Physiotherapy
- B26.10 Physiotherapy Research Laboratories
- B26.11 Volunteering and Other Activities
- B26.12 Publication of Undergraduate Students
- B26.13 Research Priorities – Projects
- B26.14 First-Year Student Welcome Program
- B26.15 Regulations for Volunteering Work
- B26.16 Departmental Collaboration Agreements

2. HAHE Material

Acronyms, European Qualifications Framework, Guidelines for Accreditation, Standards for Quality Accreditations of New Undergraduate Programs in Operation, Guidelines for the Members of EEAP, Mapping Grid for the Members of EEAP for New Undergraduate Programs in Operation, Template for the New Undergraduate Study Program in Operation Accreditation Report, Quality Indicators Report for the Undergraduate Program of the Department of

Physiotherapy 2019-2020, Quality Indicators Report for the Undergraduate Program of the Department of Physiotherapy 2020-2021, Quality Indicators Report for the Undergraduate Program of the Department of Physiotherapy 2021-2022, Quality Indicators Report for the Undergraduate Program of the Department of Physiotherapy 2022-2023.

The evaluation and accreditation processes were carried out remotely using the Zoom teleconference platform. Meetings were scheduled using Eastern European Standard Time (GMT+2), corresponding to time zone in Greece.

Monday, February 24th 2025, 15:00 - 17:00, the EEAP members had a first private meeting to preliminarily discuss the content of the submitted Department Material, establish a modus operandi for the accreditation process and allocate tasks.

Tuesday, February 25th 2025, 15:00 - 18:00, the EEAP members had a detailed overview of the history, academic profile current status, strengths and possible weaknesses of the Undergraduate Program in a virtual meeting with: a) Prof. Ioannis Anagnostopoulos, Rector of Academic & Student Affairs and Quality Assurance of the University of Thessaly; b) Prof. Ioannis Poulis, Chair of the Department of Physiotherapy; c) Prof. Nikolaos Strimpakos, Head of OMEA; d) Prof. Eleni Kortianou, Member of OMEA; e) Prof. Dimitrios Bogdanos, Member of MODIP; f) Prof. Ioannis Papadopoulos, Member of MODIP; g) Mrs Eleni Tsironi, MODIP Coordinator; and h) Mrs Panagiota Zoumpopoulou, MODIP Staff. The degree of compliance of the Undergraduate Program to the Quality Standards for Accreditation was discussed.

Tuesday, February 25th 2025, 19:00 - 19:45, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with members of the teaching staff of the Department of Physiotherapy. The discussion focused on professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, student evaluations, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, link between teaching and research, teaching staff's involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the program, and possible areas of weakness. Following teaching staff members participated in the teleconference: Prof. Eleni Kapreli, Assoc. Prof. Savvas Spanos, Assoc. Prof. Zacharias Dimitriadis, Assoc. Prof. Asimakis Kanellopoulos, Assoc. Prof. Garyfallia Pepera, Assoc. Prof. Thomas Besios and Assist. Prof. Georgios Paras.

Tuesday, February 25th 2025, 20:00 - 20:45, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with undergraduate students of the Department of Physiotherapy. The discussion focused on student satisfaction from their study experience, departmental and institutional facilities, student input in quality assurance, student life and welfare. Following students participated in the teleconference: Ms Pinelopi Provida (1st year), Mr Emmanuel Christopoulos (1st year), Mr Eleftherios Xafis (2nd year), Ms Konstantina Vakouftsi (2nd year), Mr Anargyros Keramidas (3rd

year), Mr Ioannis Kokolios (3rd year), Ms Anastasia Topalidou (3rd year), Mr Stergios Karalegkos (4th year), Ms Margarita Armouti (4th year) and Ms Fotini Krikzoni (4th year).

Tuesday, February 25th 2025, 20:45 - 21:15, the EEAP members had a private virtual debrief meeting to discuss on outcomes of previous meetings and prepare for the next day of the on-line review.

Wednesday, February 26th 2025, 15:00 - 16:00, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with administrative and teaching staff of the Department of Physiotherapy. A video featuring classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories and other facilities was presented, followed by a discussion. The goal of the discussion was to evaluate the facilities and learning resources, and to ascertain that the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate for a successful provision of the program. Following representatives of the Department of Physiotherapy participated in the teleconference: Mrs Konstantina Kaprana (Secretary of the Department), Mr Dimitrios Tsilalis (Administrative Staff), Mrs Vasiliki Giannioti (Administrative Staff), Mr Konstantinos Meligkas (Special Teaching Staff), Mr Konstantinos Sourlis (Special Teaching Staff), Mr Stavros Apostolopoulos (Special Teaching Staff).

Wednesday, February 26th 2025, 16:00 - 16:45, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with graduates of the undergraduate program of the Department of Physiotherapy to discuss their study experiences and career path. Following graduates participated in the teleconference: Mrs Natalia Kitsouli (Private Physiotherapy Practice, MSc student at the University of Patras), Mr Georgios Marios Kyriakatis (Part-time physiotherapist at Erikos Dynan Hospital, Athens, and MSc student at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), Mrs Anastasia Andriakaina (Private Physiotherapy Practice in Crete), Mr Michail Agiasmatis (Physiotherapist in International Soccer Academy, Spain), Mr Georgios Ververakis (MSc student in Sports Physiotherapy, Universidad Europea, Madrid, Spain), Mr Ioannis Grigorakis (Physiotherapist in International Soccer Academy, Berlin, Germany), Mr Georgios Stavrakakis (Private Physiotherapy Practice in Crete), Ms Smaragds Menti (Private Physiotherapy Practice in Crete), and Mr Georgios Malikai ("Triton" Elderly Care Unit, Athens).

Wednesday, February 26th 2025, 17:00 - 17:45, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with employers and social partners to discuss relations of the Department of Physiotherapy with external stakeholders from the private and public sector. Following representatives from employers and social partners participated in the teleconference: Mr Fotios Seretis (Head of the 5th Regional Health Authority of Thessaly and Sterea), Mr Serafeim Prentzas (DDS, MSc, President of the Municipality Council of Lamia), Mrs Maria Griva (MSc, Senior Physiotherapist in General Hospital of Lamia), Mr Leonidas Michos (President of the "Mikto Kentro Diimerefsis & Imerisias Frontidas AMEA", Lamia), Mr Antonios Doukas (Head of Therapeutic Department

of “Theseus” Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Center, Athens), Mr Konstantinos Grigoriadis (Senior Physiotherapist, Head of the Allied Professionals Department, University Hospital “Attiko”, Athens), Mrs Maria Sacha (Owner and Director of “Physiopolis” Private Physiotherapy Clinic, Athens), Mrs Stavroula Bakogianni (Physiotherapist, MSc, Head of the Therapeutic Department, of “Animus” Rehabilitation and Recovery Center, Larisa), and Mr Panagiotis Kostakos (Physiotherapist, Regional Dept Fthiotidos, Fokidas, Voiotias and Evritanias of Panhellenic Physiotherapy Association).

Wednesday, February 26th 2025, 19:00 - 19:30, the EEAP members had a private virtual debrief meeting to discuss on outcomes of previous meetings and prepare the oral report.

Wednesday, February 26th 2025, 19:30 - 20:15, the EEAP members had a virtual closure meeting with Prof. Ioannis Anagnostopoulos (Rector of Academic & Student Affairs and Quality Assurance of the University of Thessaly), Prof. Ioannis Poulis (Chair of the Department of Physiotherapy), Prof. Nikolaos Strimpakos (Head of OMEA), Prof. Eleni Kortianou (Member of OMEA), Prof. Dimitrios Bogdanos (Member of MODIP), Prof. Ioannis Papadopoulos (Member of MODIP), Mrs Eleni Tsironi (MODIP Coordinator), Mrs Panagiota Zoumpopoulou (MODIP Staff). During the closure meeting, there was a discussion on several points/findings requiring further clarification. Additionally, the EEAP panel summarized informally its key findings.

All discussions during the virtual meetings were constructive and took place in a professional and friendly environment. During Thursday, February 27th and Friday, February 28th, the EEAP members worked to prepare a draft of the Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Program of Physiotherapy.

III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

Please provide a brief overview of the new undergraduate study programme in operation with reference to the following: history, academic remit, duration of studies, qualification awarded, employment opportunities, orientation challenges or any other key background information. Also, you may provide a short description of the home Department and Institution, with reference to student population, campus or any other facts, as deemed appropriate.

The Department of Physiotherapy in the School of Health Sciences of the University of Thessaly operates in Lamia, Fthiotida Prefecture, and is one of the five Departments of Physiotherapy in Greece. The central location in the country allows the Department to attract students from all over Greece. The scope of the Department is to educate & train scientists in the field of Physiotherapy, so that they acquire skills for the prevention, improvement and remedy of pathological conditions, congenital and acquired, as well as traumatic injuries that cause disorders of the musculoskeletal, nervous, respiratory & cardiovascular system.

The Department of Physiotherapy has an excellent infrastructure and is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and three statutory research laboratories for training of undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition, the Department of Physiotherapy is collaborating, as part of its students' clinical practice, with the General Hospital of the city of Lamia, which has 318 developed hospital beds and Emergency Department, an Intensive Care Unit, Increased Care Unit and Coronary Diseases Unit. The General Hospital also has Orthopedic, Pulmonary, Pediatric, Obstetric, Pathology, Psychiatry, Oncology wards etc. The Department of Physiotherapy is also collaborating with other bodies such as Rehabilitation Centers, Nursing Homes, Centers for open care protection of the elderly, and Schools for children with disabilities.

The Department of Physiotherapy aims to stimulate students to develop analytical and critical thinking. It supports students to actively participate in the learning process, which is a continuous lifelong education, so that they can work as autonomous professionals and as members of the health team to perform therapeutic actions related to the prevention and rehabilitation of patients.

Furthermore, the Department of Physiotherapy aims to implement modern teaching methods, such as problem-based learning or simulation methods. It can support the needs of students with disabilities and / or special educational needs through the ACCESS service of the University of Thessaly. Research activities as well as further specialization through postgraduate and doctoral studies are also high priority in the development policy of the Department. Finally, the Department of Physiotherapy aims at extroversion by contributing to social actions & initiatives at both local and national level with the participation of both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 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 study programmes. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.

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 specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and management systems.

During the evaluation of the Institutions 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 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 strategy of the Institution 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 the 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 operation 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. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services, and all other 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 to cover at least the entire pre-defined core curriculum
- 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 the 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. Postgraduate studies and research

- It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.
- In addition, the postgraduate and doctoral programmes offered by the academic unit, the research projects performed, and the research performance of the faculty members should be mentioned.

Relevant documentation

- Introductory 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

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly was established in 2019 as part of a broader restructuring of higher education in Greece. It is one of five Physiotherapy departments in the country and operates within the School of Health Sciences. The Undergraduate Study Program spans four years (240 ECTS), providing students with a degree in Physiotherapy that aligns with internationally recognized standards in the field. The program adheres to classifications set by UNESCO and WHO, ensuring its graduates have professional recognition and employment opportunities.

The Department aims to advance knowledge in Physiotherapy through theoretical teaching, laboratory training, clinical experience, and applied research. It has a vision to become a modern, competitive department with a strong international presence, and to enhance research, infrastructure, and student education to achieve academic excellence. It also aims to strengthen faculty and administrative quality, while ensuring sustainability and motivation within its academic community.

The Department of Physiotherapy aligns with the strategy of the University of Thessaly for development of study programs, research expansion, internationalization, and local community engagement by setting objectives such as: Evolving curriculum to meet industry demands, strengthening education-industry connections, attracting highly qualified faculty, investing in state-of-the-art facilities, expanding scientific research, providing high-quality postgraduate programs, enhancing student and alumni networking, increasing community engagement, promoting sustainability initiatives, and maintaining high-quality education standards. A SWOT analysis confirmed the program's feasibility and sustainability, emphasizing its positive long-term prospects.

The Undergraduate Study Program aligns with Greece's national and regional economic needs, addressing the demand for Physiotherapy professionals in healthcare systems. The program focuses on prevention, rehabilitation, and reducing healthcare costs. Additionally, it meets international educational standards set by World Physiotherapy (WP) and the European Region of WP, ensuring global recognition. During 2019-2022 it supported 135-196 undergraduate students per academic year.

The Department of Physiotherapy consistently ranks among the top 10 within the University of Thessaly, holding the highest admission scores among regional Physiotherapy programs. It features three research laboratories, modern equipment and infrastructure (amphitheater, lecture halls, computer lab, gym) and the largest number of courses and clinical training hours among Greek Physiotherapy programs.

The Department employs 13 faculty members, five technical staff, three administrative staff, and additional teaching personnel. Faculty members have strong research backgrounds with

publications, conference participation, and involvement in national/international research programs.

The Department also runs a Master's (MSc) in Advanced Physiotherapy, a Doctoral Program, and Postdoctoral Research Initiatives. The MSc program, first established in 2014-15, focuses on scientifically validated knowledge, clinical methodologies, and rehabilitation techniques. The Doctoral Program was formally approved in 2019 and has 14 active Ph.D. candidates, while the department also supports three postdoctoral researchers.

The Department has successfully secured over €1 million in funding from national, European, and international research programs, along with consulting and service contracts. The University of Thessaly allocates an annual budget of €9,000–12,000 for its operational needs.

II. Analysis

The Academic Profile and Mission of the Academic Unit: The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly was established in 2019 as part of a national restructuring of higher education in Greece. It is one of five Physiotherapy departments in the country and operates under the School of Health Sciences. The scientific field of the Department aligns with internationally established scientific disciplines in higher education, classified under UNESCO ISCED 2013 (Code 0915 – Therapy and Rehabilitation). Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes Physiotherapy as a distinct professional specialty (ISCO code 2264) under international occupational classifications.

The Department's mission focuses on advancing, developing, and disseminating Physiotherapy knowledge through a combination of theoretical education, laboratory training, clinical experience, and applied research. The department aims to equip students with professional skills, ensuring alignment with international scientific and professional standards in Physiotherapy.

The Strategy of the Institution for its Academic Development: The University of Thessaly's strategic plan emphasizes growth in study program development, research expansion, international collaborations, local community engagement, and on enhancing the University's global standing. For the Department of Physiotherapy, this strategy focuses on modernizing study programs to address evolving healthcare demands, technological advancements, and interdisciplinary education. A SWOT analysis has been conducted, assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that influence the department's academic and research priorities. The major strengths are the structured curriculum aligned with international standards, a strong research foundation supported by three dedicated research laboratories, and the high student demand, with the department ranking among the top 10 in the University. The major challenges are to increase research funding from national and international sources, strengthen industry collaborations to enhance employability, and improve student and faculty exchanges through international partnerships.

The Documentation of the Feasibility of the Operation of the Department and the Study Program: The program aligns with regional and national economic needs and, particularly,

with the growing demand for physiotherapists in healthcare services. Thus, physiotherapy contributes to preventative care, rehabilitation, long-term patient recovery and cost reductions in public health. This became further evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program follows the standards set by World Physiotherapy (WP) and the European Region of WP (WP-ER). Internationally, Physiotherapy degrees range from 180 ECTS to 300 ECTS, ensuring comparability with European and global academic structures. The Department offers the largest number of courses and clinical training hours compared to other Greek Physiotherapy programs.

The Documentation of the Sustainability of the New Department: The Department has a solid infrastructure, strong human resources, and secured funding sources, ensuring long-term viability. The infrastructure includes seven lecture halls (60-101 students per hall), one amphitheater (104 students), eight educational laboratories, three research laboratories, one fully equipped gym and a computer lab. In addition, the Department is affiliated with the Institute of Rehabilitation and Wellness at the IASON Research and Innovation Center.

Human Resources consist of 13 faculty members (DEP), 5 technical support staff, 3 administrative staff, 2 additional faculty members from the General Department of Lamia, and 14 adjunct faculty members supporting theoretical and clinical courses.

Funding Sources include over €1 million secured from national, European, and international research projects, and an annual funding of €9,000-12,000 from the University of Thessaly.

Students and Faculty are offered a modern library and digital student services, a student welfare office and a practical training office for clinical placements. However, there are no student dormitories, while some students complained about the lack of an operational cafeteria.

The Structure of Studies: The 4-year undergraduate study program consists of 240 ECTS. It offers 40 core and 16 elective courses. The core courses are categorized into Specialty Courses, General Background Courses and Specialized Infrastructure Courses. A Clinical Internship of 10 ECTS has a duration of 4 months. The maximum semester workload is 38 ECTS.

The curriculum is designed with a student-centered approach, integrating modern teaching methodologies, clinical experience, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Assessment methods include practical training, case studies, and competency-based evaluations. Graduates acquire professional recognition under Presidential Decree 90/1995 and Law 4316/2014.

The Number of Admitted Students: The admission trends for the years 2019-2022 are: 2019-2020: 182 students; 2020-2021: 196 students; and 2021-2022: 135 students (following the introduction of the Minimum Admission Base). An estimated future annual intake is for 120-140 students. This includes students admitted via inter-university transfer agreements with Departments of Physiotherapy in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, and Sparta.

Postgraduate Studies and Research: The Department of Physiotherapy prioritizes high-level research and postgraduate education, contributing to scientific advancements and interdisciplinary collaborations. It offers a Master's Program (MSc) in Advanced Physiotherapy (established in 2014-15, re-approved in 2020), and a doctoral Program, with

14 active PhD candidates. It also offers opportunities for postdoctoral training. Thus, 3 postdoctoral researchers are currently working on funded projects such as Smart Tourist.

Faculty members have solid research profiles, demonstrated by their publications, conference presentations, and participation in national and international research projects. Their expertise ensures high-quality teaching and research supervision. The presence of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers further strengthens the academic and research environment. The department has secured competitive research funding from multiple sources. However, it is not clear whether all faculty members have contributed to this, and whether all faculty members support their research programs with extramural funding. Active collaborations exist with national and international universities and research institutions.

III. Conclusions

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly is a highly competitive and well-structured academic unit, excelling in teaching, research, and student employability. The curriculum meets international and national standards, the faculty are highly qualified, and the infrastructure supports effective learning. Additionally, the integration of research into teaching, strong industry connections, and high demand for graduates in the labor market contribute to its success and sustainability.

Areas for further improvement include the strengthening of internal quality assurance mechanisms and the expansion of research funding sources. Enhancement of collaborations with international institutions could further boost the Department's global impact.

Overall, the department effectively balances academic excellence, research innovation, and professional training, ensuring its long-term viability and growth.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit	
a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme	

Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	x
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
e. The structure of studies	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
f. The number of admitted students	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
g. Postgraduate studies	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit (overall)	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Engage for the construction of student dormitories.
- Strengthen internal quality assurance mechanisms.
- Expand research funding sources and ensure contribution of all faculty members.
- Enhance collaborations with international institutions.

Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit

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.

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.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement quality procedures that will demonstrate: a) the adequacy of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, d) the adequacy of the qualifications of the teaching staff, e) the promotion of the quality and quantity of the research work of the members of the academic unit, f) the ways of linking teaching with research, g) the level of demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, h) the quality of support services, such as administration, libraries and student care, i) the implementation of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the UGP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

Relevant documentation

- Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution
- Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit
- Quality target setting of the Institution and the academic unit (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The University of Thessaly has established a comprehensive Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This policy is publicly available and effectively integrated into the university's strategic framework, ensuring the systematic embedding of quality assurance processes across all its academic units. The institutional commitment to quality is evident

through clear procedures implemented by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU - MODIP) and Internal Evaluation Groups (IEG - OMEA), which conduct regular assessments and ensure compliance with national and European educational standards.

Specifically, within the Department of Physiotherapy, the institutional QAP is operationalized through the annual internal evaluation of the Undergraduate Program (UGP). These evaluations comprehensively examine the curriculum's appropriateness, teaching staff qualifications, pedagogical effectiveness, research productivity, and the adequacy of student support services. Through these assessments, the department demonstrates a structured commitment to continuous educational improvement and responsiveness to the evolving demands of the healthcare sector. However, while internal evaluations are consistently conducted, the documentation and systematic monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) need improvement to provide more precise and actionable insights into quality advancements.

The Undergraduate Study Program's Quality Assurance Policy has been communicated effectively to all stakeholders and aligns closely with the institution's broader Quality Assurance Policy framework. The objectives, quality indicators, and associated achievement metrics are thoroughly articulated, realistic, and suitable for the undergraduate level. Staff members exhibit strong engagement in developing and implementing these quality assurance procedures. Nevertheless, there is room for further enhancement, particularly concerning the inclusion of additional KPIs and potentially new strategic goals. Expanding the scope of quality indicators and strategic objectives could further ensure instructional excellence, strengthen the alignment of Learning Outcomes (LOs) and assessment methods with the EQF and NQF (level 6), and reinforce international best practices in curriculum design and delivery.

II. Analysis

Since the first year of its operation, an Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) committee has been established at the USP, the main objective of which is to conduct the evaluation process of the courses by the students, the preparation of the annual and quadrennial evaluation reports of the Department as well as the submission of annual evaluation reports to the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU - MODIP). Furthermore, the objective of the QAU is to recommend to the competent bodies of the Department procedures for improving the quality of the education provided to students, to evaluate the level of the research process and the administration of the Department and the USP, and to monitor the achievement of the SMART objectives set for the Department and the USP. The EEAP believes that the OMEA could be more actively involved in assuring the quality of each course of the USP in addition to students' evaluation. The OMEA could be engaged in evaluating the design, delivery, and assessment of the courses' Learning Outcomes (LOs) in compliance with the EQF and NQF – level 6, and in addition, it could help minimize possible content overlapping.

Based on the content of the USP's Quality Assurance Policy, it is clear that the policy is appropriate for the postgraduate level, demonstrating the suitability of the structure and organization of the program and includes a clear commitment of the academic unit towards its implementation and continuous improvement. The policy is published on the academic unit

website and timely disseminated to the academic staff. The qualifications and expertise of the USP's teaching staff are appropriate for the undergraduate level, and the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labor market is adequately met even though room for further improvement exists. An efficient utilization of the USP's financial resources is evident, whereas an annual review and audit of the USP's quality assurance system are taking place.

The main objectives of the USP are related to enhancing and improving the educational work, promoting extroversion/mobility and strengthening research activity - innovation. The goals mentioned above are approached through clearly defined Strategic Objectives, which relate to the following:

Strategic Goal 1. *“Enhancing and improving the educational work”.*

The first Strategic Goal is approached through three Quality Objectives (QO), which relate to improving participation in the learning process (Quality Index A1: QI-1.1), increasing the study completion rate (Quality Index 1.2: QI-1.2) and improving the assessment scores of the learning process (Quality Index 1.3: QI-1.3). Concerning QI-1.1, the increase in the annual percentage of active undergraduate students in total enrolment from the current 67.2% to 85% per semester (KPI-1.1.1) and the annual rate of USP graduates out of total active students from 16.7% to 30% (KPI-1.1.2) were recorded as KPIs. As far as QI-1.2 is concerned, the increase in the average annual degree graduating grade from 7.4 to 7.7 (KPI-1.2.3) is set as a KPI. Regarding the QI-1.3, an average course evaluation score increase from 3.55 to 4.3 (KPI-1.3.1) is set as a KPI.

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly has developed a clear strategic framework aimed at enhancing educational quality. This includes structured quality objectives that focus on improving student participation in learning, increasing study completion rates, and refining assessment methods. The strategic goal of enhancing and improving the educational work is underpinned by realistic and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that monitor student engagement, graduation rates, and academic performance. The department has demonstrated a strong commitment to student-centered education, ensuring that learning outcomes are aligned with national and European standards.

One of the notable strengths of this strategy is the consistent effort to improve student participation and retention. The department has established quantifiable targets, such as increasing the annual percentage of active students and raising the graduation rate, reflecting its commitment to improving student success. Additionally, the faculty has embraced pedagogical strategies that aim to create an interactive and engaging learning environment, supporting student motivation and academic achievement. Furthermore, there is an evident institutional investment in course evaluation processes, ensuring that teaching methodologies remain dynamic and responsive to student needs.

While these initiatives demonstrate a strong foundation, certain areas require further refinement. Although course evaluation mechanisms exist, greater emphasis should be placed on systematically integrating student feedback into curriculum improvements. A structured process ensuring that student evaluations translate into targeted instructional adjustments would reinforce the department's commitment to continuous quality enhancement. Moreover, greater support for faculty in adopting innovative teaching methodologies is

essential. Ensuring that all academic staff, including non-permanent faculty members, undergo pedagogical training would contribute to standardizing instructional quality across all courses.

Another area that warrants attention is the optimization of curriculum coordination to reduce content overlap between courses. A well-defined framework for course alignment and thematic integration would help eliminate redundancy and promote a more structured knowledge progression for students. Furthermore, introducing periodic peer consultation among faculty members could enhance collaborative teaching practices and ensure greater coherence in course delivery.

In addition, the department should consider strengthening its faculty mentoring system. Assigning newly appointed instructors to senior faculty mentors would facilitate knowledge transfer, instructional improvement, and alignment with departmental teaching standards. A structured faculty development scheme (in addition to the one provided by KEDIMA) that includes peer observation and feedback sessions could further promote teaching excellence and contribute to a more cohesive educational environment.

Overall, the department has made significant progress in enhancing educational quality, but continuous refinements in curriculum coordination, faculty development, and instructional innovation will further support its long-term strategic objectives.

Strategic Goal B. “Extroversion / Mobility”.

The second strategic goal is approached through one QO, which relates to strengthening participation in International Mobility Programs (Quality Index B1: QI-2.1). In relation to QI-2.1, the increase the annual percentage of outgoing ERASMUS students out of the total active students from 0% to 1% (KPI-2.1.1), the annual rate of incoming ERASMUS students in the total number of active students from 0% to 2% (KPI-2.1.2), the number of incoming faculty members under mobility schemes from 0 to 1 (KPI-2.1.3), the number of outgoing faculty members under mobility schemes from 0 to 4 (KPI-2.1.4), and the number of outgoing doctoral candidates using mobility schemes (KPI-2.1.5) were set as KPIs.

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly has demonstrated a commitment to strengthening its international profile and promoting student and faculty mobility. The department has developed structured initiatives to support internationalization efforts, particularly through Erasmus+ and other academic exchange programs. These initiatives have contributed to expanding collaborative agreements with European institutions, increasing opportunities for student exchanges, faculty mobility, and joint research endeavors.

One of the key strengths of this strategy is the increase in participation in international mobility programs. The department has set measurable targets, such as raising the annual percentage of outgoing and incoming Erasmus students and faculty. This has enhanced cultural exchange, academic networking, and the international experience of both students and faculty members. Additionally, efforts to expand bilateral agreements with foreign universities have provided greater opportunities for international research collaboration and co-teaching initiatives.

Despite these positive developments, there are areas where further improvement is necessary. While mobility initiatives have gained momentum, the overall participation rate remains relatively low compared to international benchmarks. Increasing awareness and

removing administrative barriers to participation could encourage more students and faculty members to engage in mobility programs. Furthermore, ensuring that mobility experiences translate into tangible academic and professional benefits for participants should be a priority. Establishing stronger support mechanisms for returning students and faculty to integrate their international experience into the department's teaching and research activities would strengthen the impact of mobility programs.

Additionally, a more strategic approach to leveraging international collaborations for research funding opportunities could further enhance the department's research output. Encouraging faculty to actively participate in joint research proposals, European funding schemes, and interdisciplinary projects would provide more avenues for academic and scientific collaboration.

While the department has laid a strong foundation for internationalization and mobility, continuous efforts in expanding global partnerships, streamlining administrative processes, and maximizing the impact of mobility experiences on academic and professional development will further enhance its success in this strategic goal.

Strategic Goal 3. *"Strengthening research activity - innovation"*.

The third Strategic Goal, strengthening research activity – innovation, is approached through three Quality Objectives (QO), which relate to attracting new research potential (Quality Index A1: QI-3.1), Improving performance in research output (Quality Index 1.2: QI-3.2) and Improving performance in research recognition (Quality Index 1.2: QI-3.3). Average annual number of Doctoral Candidates per faculty member from 1,17% to 1,5% (KPI-3.1.1), the number of ongoing projects per faculty member from 5,17 to 6 (KPI-2.1.3), the average annual number of submitted research proposals submitted from 3 to 5 (KPI-3.2.2), the number of faculty members participating in research projects from 8 to 10 (KPI-3.2.3), the average annual number of papers published in peer-reviewed Scopus journals per faculty member 2,42 to 5 (KPI-3.3.1) and the average annual number of citations from 35,67 to 70 (KPI-3.3.2).

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly has made some efforts toward enhancing its research activity and fostering innovation; however, its current research performance remains suboptimal. Despite an increasing number of high-impact publications, externally funded research projects, and international collaborations, the department's overall research output and impact remain limited compared to leading European physiotherapy departments. A small fraction of the faculty consistently contributes to high-impact research, while a significant number of faculty members produce minimal scientific output, as reflected in citation metrics.

While it is particularly positive that undergraduate students actively contribute to research publications, the overall faculty research activity is highly imbalanced. Only two faculty members have achieved over 1,000 Scopus citations, consistently publishing in high-impact scientific journals. Meanwhile, three additional faculty members have citation counts between 100 and 500, while six faculty members remain below 100 citations. This uneven research engagement does not align with the department's high academic rankings, particularly considering that the majority of faculty hold high-level academic titles, including five (5) Professors and six (6) Associate Professors, with two (2) full Professors having fewer than 115

citations. This disparity in research productivity raises concerns about whether the current faculty research output effectively supports the institution's broader strategic goal of improving its academic standing in global rankings.

A fully implemented strategic research development plan is required to elevate the research performance of all faculty members. A minimum research standard should be introduced, with a five-year target ensuring that all faculty members reach at least 300 Scopus citations as a first step. Without a department-wide commitment to enhancing research performance, the current trends will hinder the University of Thessaly's objective of being included in top-tier global university rankings. Furthermore, the relatively low overall research impact does not align with the department's quality assurance objectives, particularly in terms of its compliance with institutional policies on research excellence and internationalization.

One of the most critical weaknesses of the department's research framework is the limited participation in competitive European research grants such as Horizon Europe. Faculty success rates in securing international funding remain low, significantly reducing opportunities for large-scale, high-impact research projects. To address this, structured training in grant writing, research proposal development, and project management should be introduced to enhance faculty success in securing competitive funding. Additionally, stronger incentives and support mechanisms must be established to encourage faculty participation in major international research consortia.

The workload distribution among faculty members presents another critical challenge. Many faculty members face a disproportionate focus on teaching and administrative duties, leaving insufficient time for research activity and funding applications. Without a structured workload redistribution policy, research will remain a secondary priority for most faculty staff, restricting the department's ability to achieve international competitiveness. Implementing clear policies that allocate dedicated research time for high-performing faculty and introducing incentive structures based on research productivity would significantly improve the situation.

To achieve the department's strategic goal of strengthening research activity and innovation, additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must be introduced. These should include mandatory participation in international research consortia, measurable increases in European and national research funding acquisition, and an enhanced focus on faculty research impact in high-ranking journals. Moreover, the target of 70 citations per faculty member is insufficient and must be significantly revised. The department should introduce a tiered minimum citation target per academic rank, aligning with internationally accepted good practices to ensure an equitable and ambitious research culture.

A crucial structural reform necessary for improving research output is the recruitment of permanent technical laboratory staff. Ensuring that all research laboratories within the department have full-time technical support will enable faculty to focus on research development rather than administrative or operational tasks. Without proper research infrastructure support, efforts to enhance faculty productivity and research quality will remain constrained.

While the department has made some incremental progress, a comprehensive and structured research enhancement strategy is required. The direct link between faculty promotion and

research activity must be reinforced, ensuring that academic advancement is directly tied to measurable research contributions. A similar regulatory framework at the national level is also needed, encouraging institutions to prioritize quality research output in academic career progression. Aligning faculty promotions with international research benchmarks will ensure long-term sustainability and global competitiveness in the department's research profile.

Finally, the EEAP considers that "Service to the Community" should also be included in the USP's Quality Agenda through specific initiatives and activities, as this constitutes one of the core pillars of the academic institutions' mission (in addition to excellence in teaching and research).

III. Conclusions

The University of Thessaly has effectively established and integrated a robust Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) consistent with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), demonstrating a clear institutional commitment to continuous quality enhancement across its academic units. The Department of Physiotherapy has successfully operationalized this policy through structured annual internal evaluations covering curriculum design, teaching quality, research output, and student support. The Undergraduate Study Program's (USP) Quality Assurance Policy is clearly defined, effectively communicated, and suitably aligned with the broader institutional framework, reflecting realistic and relevant quality objectives.

However, there remains room for further improvement. The systematic documentation and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) require strengthening to provide more precise and actionable insights into the department's progress. Furthermore, the current strategic goals—particularly in research activity and innovation—would benefit from expansion and the addition of targeted KPIs. Emphasizing a more structured approach to curriculum coordination, increased integration of student feedback, faculty development in innovative pedagogies, and enhanced mentorship systems will further reinforce instructional excellence. Lastly, introducing strategic objectives explicitly addressing societal contribution would better reflect the holistic mission of higher education institutions and align with international academic best practices.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- ☐ Strengthen the documentation and systematic monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable more precise assessment and targeted improvement of quality assurance practices.
- ☐ Expand the involvement of the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) beyond student evaluations by incorporating evaluation of course design, delivery, and alignment of Learning Outcomes (LOs) with the EQF and NQF standards.
- ☐ Establish a structured mechanism for systematically integrating student evaluation feedback into curriculum revisions and instructional adjustments.
- ☐ Expand the current comprehensive faculty development program, incorporating a more formal pedagogical training on a compulsory basis, including peer mentoring, to standardize and enhance teaching quality and innovation across the department.
- ☐ Develop additional KPIs specifically aimed at improving research performance and recognition, including mandatory participation in international research consortia and securing competitive European research grants (e.g., Horizon Europe).
- ☐ Introduce tiered citation targets per academic rank, aligned with international benchmarks, to ensure balanced and equitable research productivity among faculty members.
- Formulate a strategic objective explicitly addressing the USP's societal contribution to align more closely with the broader institutional mission and global academic best practices.

Principle 3: 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.

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. 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 structure: courses, course categories (including courses for the acquisition of digital skills), ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities.
- Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a related scientific field.
- Student Guide
- Course outlines
- Teaching staff (list of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship)
- QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new study programme and its compliance with the Standards

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The University of Thessaly follows a rigorous and well-defined procedure for developing new undergraduate study programs, explicitly aligning them with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF level 6) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Undergraduate Program (UGP) of the Department of Physiotherapy communicates its academic profile, objectives, structure, and anticipated professional qualifications, reflecting comprehensive strategic planning. The curriculum effectively incorporates digital skill competencies through dedicated courses such as "Research Methodology-Biostatistics," "Health Informatics – e-Health," and an elective Informatics module, aligning closely with European higher education trends and contemporary labor market demands.

The program's design thoroughly addresses employment prospects and graduate marketability, demonstrating explicit attention to smooth student progression and realistic workload expectations, following the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Furthermore, the approval and periodic revision processes involve consultations with stakeholders, including external experts, alumni, and students, ensuring responsiveness to professional standards and continuous curriculum improvement.

Nevertheless, several areas require further refinement. While learning outcomes are adequately stated and generally correspond to EQF level 6, there is insufficient explicit alignment with higher-order cognitive skills as described by Bloom's taxonomy (e.g., analysis, evaluation, and creation). Additionally, a shortcoming is noted as the absence of a formal and transparent learning outcomes mapping process connecting specific module content and evaluation methods.

Students participating in the EEAP consultation highlighted gaps in entrepreneurial skills, recommending the integration of entrepreneurship education as a compulsory core component of the curriculum to better prepare graduates for professional practice. Additionally, consideration of supplementary certified training or courses focused on academic skill development, offered either within or outside the formal curriculum structure, could significantly enhance students' professional adaptability and readiness.

Overall, the Physiotherapy UGP demonstrates robust alignment with European standards and strategic coherence. However, targeted improvements in learning outcome mapping, explicit integration of higher cognitive skills, entrepreneurial training, and academic skills enhancement would further elevate its quality and effectiveness.

II. Analysis

The University of Thessaly systematically adheres to clearly defined procedures when developing new undergraduate study programs, ensuring alignment with national and European educational standards. The design of the Undergraduate Program (UGP) of the Department of Physiotherapy has followed meticulous steps, incorporating a comprehensive academic profile that explicitly states the program's identity, orientation, and objectives. The structure and content of the program are strategically organized, with learning outcomes appropriately articulated according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF level 6)

and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), thus ensuring coherence with universally accepted standards in physiotherapy education.

A notable strength of the UGP's design is its clear integration of digital skills into the curriculum. The inclusion of dedicated courses such as "Research Methodology-Biostatistics" (5 ECTS), "Health Informatics – e-Health" (4 ECTS), and an additional elective course in Informatics (2 ECTS) significantly supports students in acquiring essential digital competencies. This aligns with the broader strategic priorities of European tertiary education, addressing current labor market needs that increasingly emphasize digital literacy and proficiency in health informatics. The ECTS credits assigned to these modules appear appropriate and consistent with European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System guidelines, effectively reflecting the anticipated student workload for undergraduate-level coursework.

The Physiotherapy program's design process has clearly considered relevant factors such as institutional strategic priorities, available labor market data, and employment prospects for graduates. The rationale behind the program includes explicit references to employment opportunities and the smooth progression of students through each educational stage, thus aiming to enhance both academic success and employability. Additionally, the feasibility study conducted by the department sufficiently addresses the objectives, inputs, and expected outcomes, outlining how the curriculum effectively responds to identified market demands.

The curriculum's structure is logically organized, promoting a coherent academic pathway that systematically builds upon foundational knowledge, progressing to more specialized topics. Modules are strategically sequenced to facilitate gradual and meaningful knowledge progression, which is critical in achieving intended learning outcomes. However, despite the curriculum's overall strength, there remains potential for more explicit and systematic mapping of each module's specific learning outcomes with Bloom's taxonomy to enhance clarity and transparency. Currently, learning outcomes for individual modules generally follow EQF level 6, although improvements can be made by ensuring a more explicit alignment with higher-order cognitive skills (analysis, evaluation, and creation).

Moreover, a formal learning outcome mapping process linking module content, learning outcomes, and evaluation methods is not explicitly documented. A well-articulated mapping practice, clearly demonstrating how assessment tasks directly measure intended outcomes, would significantly enhance curriculum transparency and instructional alignment. An example of good practice would be to employ a structured matrix clearly correlating learning objectives, teaching methodologies, and assessments, ensuring educational coherence and consistency throughout the program.

An important enhancement based on student feedback provided during the EEAP meeting would be the introduction of a compulsory core course on entrepreneurship. Students indicated that while they have excellent foundational knowledge and clinical skills, they lack competencies in organizing and managing their professional activities from a business perspective. Establishing such a course would bridge this critical skills gap, better preparing graduates for the realities of professional practice and enhancing their overall employability.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to incorporating a course or certified training focused on developing academic skills. This could be provided within the formal curriculum or

through supplementary workshops outside the main program structure. Such initiatives would significantly enhance students' academic readiness and professional adaptability, further aligning the program with international educational best practices.

The institutional regulatory framework clearly outlines the formal procedure for program approval and periodic review. This procedure appropriately involves internal and external stakeholder consultations, including feedback from external experts, students, alumni, and market representatives. The active engagement of these stakeholders ensures program responsiveness to evolving professional standards and enhances educational quality through continuous feedback and refinement.

Finally, the department's Student Guide is comprehensive, detailed, and highly informative. It effectively communicates key information, including course content, expected learning outcomes, and assessment methods. However, ensuring periodic reviews of the guide's content for clarity and conciseness would further enhance its utility, ensuring it remains aligned with contemporary educational best practices.

In conclusion, the Department of Physiotherapy has robustly designed its Undergraduate Study Program, by incorporating essential strategic elements and aligning closely with European and national standards. While the overall curriculum and structure are solid, further improvement in outcome mapping, systematic integration of higher cognitive levels according to Bloom's taxonomy, and ongoing refinement of stakeholder engagement processes would elevate the program's quality even further.

III. Conclusions

The University of Thessaly demonstrates a robust and strategic approach in developing its new Undergraduate Study Program in Physiotherapy, thoroughly aligning with EQF and NQF standards and incorporating critical competencies such as digital literacy. The clear strategic vision, effective stakeholder engagement, and careful consideration of market needs highlight the department's proactive stance towards quality education.

Nonetheless, targeted enhancements are necessary to achieve full educational excellence. Explicit integration of higher-order cognitive skills within learning outcomes and a structured, transparent outcome mapping system are crucial steps forward. Moreover, addressing the entrepreneurial and academic skill gaps identified by students would significantly improve graduate employability and preparedness for professional practice. Such refinements would ensure sustained alignment with best practices in higher education, reinforcing the program's overall quality and impact.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	x
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Establish a formal, structured mapping process explicitly connecting module content, learning outcomes, and assessment methods, ensuring clear alignment with Bloom's taxonomy, EQF and NQF (Level 6).
- ❑ Introduce a compulsory core course on entrepreneurship and professional practice management to address the significant skills gap identified by students regarding business-oriented competencies.
- ❑ Consider implementing additional certified training in academic skills within or supplementary to the curriculum, enhancing students' academic readiness and adaptability to professional challenges.

Principle 4: Student-centred Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

The academic unit 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 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

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The duration of studies is four years. Each academic year comprises two semesters: one winter semester and one spring semester. The modules are organized and allocated based on a total of 8 semesters. The Department reports that the allocation of ECTS and course workload is based on the principles of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area Framework.

The Study Program includes mandatory core subjects, as well as optional ones. <https://physio.uth.gr/en/undergraduate-curriculum/>

The Department of Physiotherapy uses e-Class, an Electronic Course Management System, to provide Asynchronous Distance Learning Services (<http://eclass.uth.gr>) as well as the MS Teams platform for modern distance learning when required. The lecture notes for all core and elective subjects are available online.

<https://eclass.uth.gr/modules/auth/opencourses.php?fc=81>

The study guide describes the assessment criteria and methods and is available on the Department's website. (<https://physio.uth.gr/en/study>)

Teaching is conducted in a variety of ways, including traditional classroom and laboratory settings. Different delivery methods are employed depending on the context, utilizing a range of pedagogical approaches flexibly. These methods include lectures, seminars, laboratory practice, fieldwork, bibliographic study and analysis, tutorials, placements, clinical practice, interactive teaching, educational visits, projects, essay writing and artistic creativity.

The assessment of students reflects the degree of achievement of the expected learning outcomes. Student performance is evaluated using a variety of methods of assessment, such as exams, projects, literature reviews, and laboratory work. Professors are knowledgeable about the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their skills in this area by KEDIMA. Students are provided with information, which is accompanied—if necessary—by advice regarding the learning process. The criteria and assessment methods are published in advance. The assessment of students is coherent and applied fairly to all students. It is conducted according to the established procedures and by more than one examiner, where possible.

The Practical Training (PT) is an effective method for students to contact and familiarize themselves with the subjects of their possible future employment and for a more complete knowledge and understanding of the problems and specificities of their professional field, as well as for achieving their better integration into the workplace immediately after the end of their studies. Within the framework of the PT Program, students of the Department's undergraduate program practice under supervision for 4 months, full-time, in various health institutions on issues related to the science of Physiotherapy and its practical application. Depending on the sources of funding for the PT, this can be done either in Public Bodies or in Private Bodies, through ESPA, OAED programs or student mobility with the European Erasmus+ program. Students are informed before they apply to the collaborating bodies. If they meet the conditions, they choose a body and funding program. The individual procedures are detailed on the University website, in the link for European Mobility (<http://erasmus.uth.gr/gr/>). More information is provided in the Practice Guide.

The Thesis is an elective course of the Spring Semester and corresponds to ten (10) ECTS. Each Thesis is prepared by a student or a group of students (maximum number of students 2) and can be prepared either in a Research Laboratory of the University, or in a Research Laboratory of another University or Research Center. More information regarding the procedures is provided in the Thesis Guide.

In the context of caring for students with special educational needs and for their attendance at the University to be effective, special facilities are provided both during the period of studies (secretarial and advisory support) and during the examination period (special examination methods). For this purpose, students belonging to this category may contact the President of the Department or the Department Secretariat by submitting the relevant supporting documents. More information can be found on the website (<http://www.uth.gr/prosvasi.uth.gr>).

The Student Counseling Service of the Laboratory of Psychology and Applications in Education enables students of the University of Thessaly, if they so wish, to receive psychological support and assistance for personal difficulties and concerns, as well as to be trained in acquiring skills to manage and solve problems they may encounter.

Information: <http://www.uth.gr/students/symvouleutiki>

A faculty member is assigned as an academic advisor for each student upon enrollment in the Department. The collaboration between the student and the Academic Advisor takes place on the premises of the University on a personal basis. It focuses indicatively on the following topics: Determining academic and professional goals, choosing a field of study and courses, academic progress monitoring, availability and use of academic resources, and clarification of academic and university regulations.

There is a relevant official procedure for student appeals. The formal complaint procedure is described in the Regulation of Management of Complaints and Objections for Students and is accessible on line as is the relevant form (<https://physio.uth.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Regulation-of-Management-of-complaint.pdf>). To register complaints, the Form “Report of Complaint/Objection” is available; it submits the complains directly to the Advisor Professor. In collaboration with the supervisor or the Chair of the Department, the advisor Professor examines the problem and progresses in the application of direct corrective actions, simultaneously informing the student.

With the completion of the 8th and 10th week of teaching each semester, the students of the Department of Physiotherapy have the right to electronically evaluate the educational process with the aim of improving the effectiveness of teaching and the future organization of Program Undergraduate Studies.

The Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) of the University of Thessaly is responsible for the implementation of a six-monthly evaluation of the educational process of courses from students and provides the tools for a smooth conduct of the process. The OMEA (3-member Internal Evaluation Committee) of the Department, by taking into account the results of the internal evaluation of the Department, as given by all students of the Department and teachers, and at the beginning of each calendar year, prepares the Internal Evaluation Report of the Department (for the previous year) with the aim of improving the quality of the educational process. All instructors have access to the results of the evaluation of their courses, as they are sent by the MODIP of the University of Thessaly after the evaluation’s completion, aiming to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching.

II. Analysis

The application of student-centred learning and teaching ensures that the department respects the diversity of students and addresses their various needs by adopting flexible learning processes.

For the management of student complaints, the Department has established procedures that facilitate the submission and consideration of student comments.

The Department regularly assesses the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, as evidenced particularly by student evaluations. The results of the analysis of the surveys are discussed by OMEA, and corresponding recommendations are made to the unit.

This enhances the sense of autonomy of students, while at the same time ensuring adequate guidance and support from the professor and academic tutor, promoting mutual respect in the student-professor relationship.

The study program provides the necessary conditions for students to be encouraged to take an active role in the learning process, and the assessment methods applied are oriented towards this direction. Student-centered learning and teaching are implemented, playing a significant role in enhancing student motivation and their active participation in the learning process, with continuous monitoring of the implementation of the curricula and the evaluation of their outcomes.

III. Conclusions

The Department of Physiotherapy is fully compliant with Principle 4, as its study program is delivered in a student-centered learning environment that promotes mutual respect.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and assessment of students	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Continue encouraging students to participate in the evaluations of teaching.

Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes

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

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*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments*
- *Printed Diploma Supplement*

Certificate from the President of the academic unit that the diploma supplement is awarded to all graduates without exception together with the degree or the certificate of completion of studies

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

Student Admission and Registration Procedures: Students are admitted to the Department through nationwide entrance examinations as well as entrance exams for transfer students from other departments.

Following the identification process at the Department's Secretariat, students are issued a student ID and a registration number. Moreover, they are provided with their electronic account details, which grant them membership in the university community. Once the account is activated, students are granted access to all electronic services available through both the University of Thessaly and the Department. Instructions and all necessary information regarding the required procedures (Document B26.3) are posted on a dedicated online link on the faculty's website (<https://physio.uth.gr>). The website is easily accessible to students, easy to navigate and regularly updated. All processes related to students are coordinated by the department's administration office, which consists of four administrative staff members, as well as by an electronic service that functions as an online secretary service.

To ensure that students are well-informed about the core principles and structure of the Physiotherapy Department's curriculum, along with their rights and responsibilities, an orientation event is held annually at the start of the winter semester for new first-year students. In addition, support is provided to newly admitted students to ensure a smooth transition into the academic environment (Document B26.14). This support is facilitated by an academic counselor, who is a member of the teaching staff and offers guidance and assistance throughout the initial stages of their studies (Document B18).

Student Rights, Obligations, and Monitoring Progression: Teaching of courses and laboratory sessions is conducted in accordance with the official academic timetable. Detailed information regarding each course, including the specific requirements and obligations of students, is provided in the Course Descriptions within the Study Guide of the Department of Physiotherapy, the Undergraduate Physiotherapy Program Regulations, the Unified Clinical Practice Guide, and the e-class electronic platform, which serves as the Department's asynchronous e-learning platform. These resources outline the students' responsibilities concerning their participation in laboratory sessions as well as lectures, ensuring they are fully informed of the expectations for their academic engagement.

To monitor the students' progress, an internal evaluation and self-evaluation of the program take place. Based on the outcomes of these evaluations, OMEA proposes actions aiming to optimize student participation, whereas the program committee proposes modifications to the curriculum. Academic counselors are available to all students to provide advice related to successful completion of courses.

Internship and Scholarships: The 'Internship' is a mandatory specialization course that is part of the 8th semester of studies in the Undergraduate Physiotherapy Program of the Department of Physiotherapy. Its completion is a necessary requirement for successful completion of Physiotherapy studies and obtaining the degree. It is supervised by the student's academic counselor and is graded by the Academic Advisor in collaboration with the hosting organization. The internship takes place in positions within the public and private sectors, following relevant scheduling and planning. The academic unit has developed a network including productive bodies to support this component. Students can choose the

organization where they will carry out their internship from a wide selection of available institutions. These organizations can be accessed through an electronic link on the Department's website. The internship regulations are made known to the students through the Internship Guide. The regulations governing internship, including the necessary procedures for placement and supervision, are clearly stated in the Internal Operating Regulations Guide.

The University announces the availability of scholarships and the call for applications on its website. Scholarships are made available and announced through a variety of organizations, such as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the State Scholarship Foundation and endowments from other public and private foundations.

Thesis Writing: The program has defined a set of quality requirements for the implementation of the thesis. The guidelines related to the thesis writing, and the procedures for evaluating and approving theses, are clearly stated in a Thesis Handbook posted on the Department's website.

Recognition of Degrees: Each course is assigned a specific number of ECTS credits, which is made known to students through the study guide. Each semester corresponds to 30 ECTS credits. Students can recognize and transfer credits from compulsory and elective courses completed in their program of study based on the grade and number of credits (ECTS) earned in the host department's program. The ECTS credits are transferrable providing that course content is similar and consistent with comparable courses in the Department or other institutions abroad.

Student Mobility: Students are encouraged to participate in mobility programs, such as ERASMUS. The faculty administration ensures that students are promptly informed about mobility programs through emails sent to their institutional accounts. Announcements regarding mobility issues are regularly posted on the department's website. In addition, seminars on mobility topics are organized to provide students with accurate and timely information. There is also a dedicated ERASMUS office to assist with students' needs. The rights and obligations of students are defined by the department's Mobility Regulation.

Completion of Studies- Obtaining a Degree and Diploma Supplement: Earning the BSc degree in Physiotherapy requires that students have successfully passed all courses and completed the Internship requirement. In addition, students must either complete a thesis or opt to take two elective courses in lieu of completing the thesis requirement. Upon completion of the required procedures, a certificate of successful completion of studies is issued by the Secretariat of the Department, which serves as a copy of the Degree. The Diploma Supplement in both Greek and English is automatically issued to all students without the need for any application.

Suspension of Studies: According to law, students have the right to request that their studies be interrupted temporarily. Accordingly, studies can be interrupted for as many semesters as the student requires but not more than a total of eight semesters. The additional semesters do not count towards the above maximum duration of study. Upon termination of the student's leave of absence, they return to the program for the completion of their studies.

II. Analysis

The department offers robust support for students, from the admission process through to graduation. These support systems ensure that students have all the necessary resources they need to excel. The availability of detailed guides (e.g., Study Guide, Practical Training Guide, Thesis Handbook) and regular updates via the website and email ensures that students are well-informed. By offering mobility programs, automatic issuance of the Diploma Supplement, and adherence to ECTS standards, the Department facilitates the international recognition of students' degrees and enhances their opportunities. Published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the program are carefully developed and applied by the academic unit.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly is entirely in accordance with the accreditation criterion which is implemented in an effective manner (fully compliant).

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- ☐ Continue the established good regulatory practice and follow possible developments of the European system of higher education.

Principle 6: 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.

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, 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 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, also based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The University of Thessaly follows transparent and rigorous faculty recruitment procedures, fully complying with the Greek higher education legislative framework (Law 4957/2022). These recruitment processes explicitly emphasize meritocracy, transparency, and the objective assessment of candidates' qualifications, teaching capabilities, research expertise, and professional experience, effectively ensuring the recruitment of suitably qualified academic personnel.

The teaching staff within the Department of Physiotherapy demonstrate adequate qualifications and cover the required specializations comprehensively, maintaining a satisfactory student-to-faculty ratio. The Department ensures transparency in staff recruitment and applies clearly stated eligibility criteria aligning closely with national standards. Professional development opportunities for teaching staff exist and are supported by the Institution; however, compulsory, regular training specifically aimed at pedagogical advancement and enhanced research competencies could be further developed.

The research productivity among the teaching staff presents notable variability. A minority of the faculty staff exhibit high research productivity with publications in internationally recognized journals, reflected by Scopus citation metrics exceeding 1,000. Conversely, the majority of faculty members publish predominantly in lower-ranked journals (Q3 and Q4) or domestic Greek journals, indicating room for significant improvement. Additionally, workload distribution appears disproportionately skewed toward teaching and administrative tasks. It does not consider research engagement, limiting available time and resources for research activities and participation in internationally competitive funding programs.

Faculty mobility through Erasmus+ is institutionally encouraged, yet participation remains modest due to administrative and procedural challenges restricting international academic engagement and collaboration opportunities. Although initiatives exist to link teaching and research activities, the integration is inconsistent and requires further strategic strengthening. Similarly, while student evaluations are regularly conducted, their systematic integration into faculty teaching improvements and professional development initiatives must be enhanced.

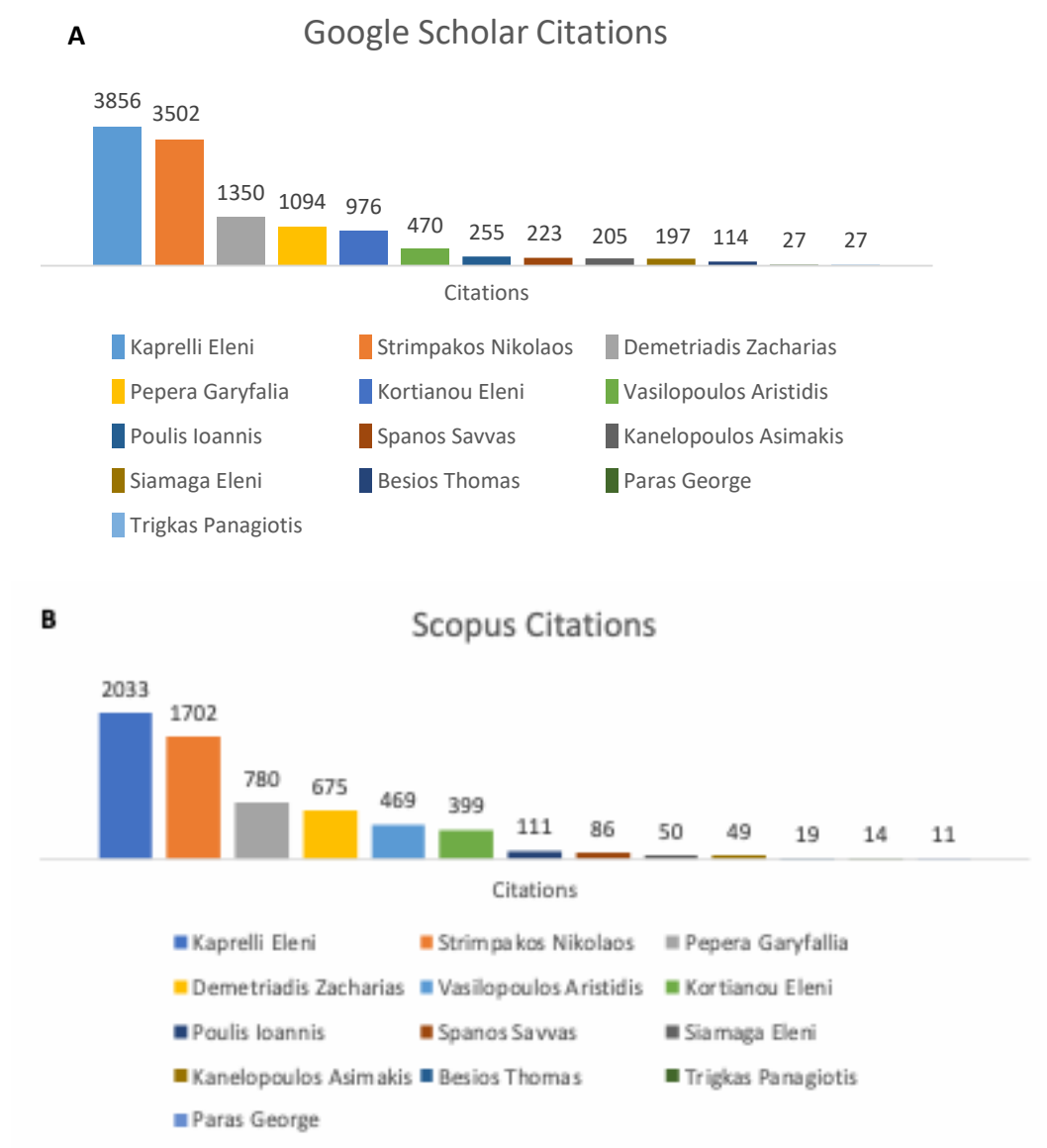
Lastly, explicit and structured integration of community service and societal contributions into faculty responsibilities and institutional objectives is currently underdeveloped. Establishing clear and measurable objectives in this domain would enhance the societal impact of the academic unit and align with international higher education best practices.

II. Analysis

The University of Thessaly demonstrates a robust and comprehensive approach to ensuring the competence and high quality of its teaching staff for the new Undergraduate Study Program (UGP) in Physiotherapy. It adheres closely to the relevant Greek legislation and effectively aligns with international standards for higher education.

Firstly, the recruitment procedures for faculty staff follow explicit, transparent guidelines stipulated under Greek Law 4957/2022. These procedures include articulated eligibility criteria emphasizing candidates' academic qualifications, teaching experience, research capabilities, and professional expertise relevant to Physiotherapy. Recruitment processes are consistently open and transparent, involving public advertisements for vacancies, comprehensive peer evaluations, and structured selection committees with external evaluators. This ensures fairness, objectivity, and meritocracy, which significantly contributes to securing high-quality staff capable of meeting the academic demands of the undergraduate program. The alignment of these procedures with international best practices promotes transparency, equity, and excellence in faculty appointments.

The Department's current teaching staff exhibits appropriate qualifications and experience to cover essential subject areas of the Physiotherapy curriculum, maintaining an adequate staff-to-student ratio. Faculty expertise aligns well with curricular requirements, thereby ensuring sufficient academic and clinical teaching capacity. Nevertheless, analysis of individual research activities indicates considerable variability among faculty members. A limited group consistently publishes in high-impact journals (primarily Q1 and Q2 journals according to Scopus) and achieves significant international visibility, exemplified by having citations exceeding 1,000. Conversely, the majority of staff members demonstrate a notably lower research impact, predominantly publishing in lower-tier journals (Q3/Q4 categories) or domestic Greek journals. This disparity between faculty ranks and corresponding research outputs raises questions about whether existing research productivity fully supports the program's strategic objectives, particularly regarding international recognition and competitive research standing. The following two graphs (A & B) present a detailed analysis of the faculty staff research work impact.



Faculty workload distribution also warrants attention. Although teaching workloads are clearly defined, the significant commitment required by instructional and administrative duties can

impede sufficient engagement in research activities. This imbalance challenges faculty to maintain and increase their research productivity, which is critical for aligning the department with global academic standards and enhancing its international reputation. Therefore, instituting structured workload management policies that clearly allocate dedicated research time, particularly to faculty demonstrating high research potential, is essential.

Professional development opportunities for the faculty exist but could be considerably expanded. The current provision includes participation in KEDIMA faculty development training, conferences, workshops, and seminars, yet compulsory and recurrent programs aimed explicitly at enhancing pedagogical skills, innovative teaching methodologies, and effective integration of new technologies into teaching practice are limited. Providing formalized and compulsory regular training in pedagogy, research methodologies, academic writing, grant applications, and project management would significantly strengthen teaching quality and research outcomes, enhancing the overall educational provision of the program.

Faculty mobility is officially encouraged, primarily through Erasmus+ and international exchange initiatives. Despite this institutional support, faculty participation remains relatively low compared to international benchmarks. Greater promotion and facilitation of mobility opportunities could enhance the professional development of faculty members, allowing them to adopt innovative teaching approaches and foster international research collaborations. This requires increased institutional support and streamlined administrative procedures to remove barriers currently limiting active participation.

Teaching and research are linked but inconsistently applied across the curriculum. Currently, undergraduate students have opportunities to participate in faculty research projects, significantly enhancing their learning experience. However, systematic integration and explicit inclusion of research experiences within teaching modules remain underdeveloped. Establishing clear strategic guidelines and incentives to systematically embed research activities within the teaching framework, would improve student engagement, enhance educational quality, and support faculty research productivity.

Regular student evaluations of teaching effectiveness are conducted, demonstrating the department's commitment to continuous improvement and accountability. However, systematic and formal mechanisms for incorporating student feedback directly into instructional improvement and faculty development plans remain underutilized. A structured, documented process ensuring student evaluations lead to tangible enhancements in teaching methodologies would reinforce continuous educational quality improvement.

Lastly, while the department acknowledges the importance of community engagement, documentation and systematic integration of community service into faculty activities and performance metrics appear limited. Given that community engagement constitutes a core element of higher education missions globally, establishing clearly defined strategic objectives and relevant KPIs for community contribution would align the department with international good practices, enhancing its societal impact and reinforcing its academic and professional reputation.

III. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly effectively adheres to transparent and legislatively compliant recruitment practices, maintains adequately qualified teaching staff, and demonstrates commitment to professional development. However, addressing research productivity disparities, workload balance, structured faculty development programs, international mobility enhancement, explicit teaching-research linkages, systematic student feedback integration, and formalizing community service contributions represent essential areas for improvement. Strategic enhancements in these areas will significantly elevate faculty quality and program effectiveness, aligning with the department's broader strategic goals and international academic standards.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	x
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Further strengthen and formalize workload management policies to clearly allocate dedicated research time, particularly for faculty members demonstrating strong research potential and productivity.
- Implement structured, compulsory professional development programs for teaching staff, emphasizing pedagogical training, innovative teaching methodologies, academic writing, and grant application skills.
- Actively promote and facilitate increased participation in faculty mobility schemes, particularly through Erasmus+, by removing administrative barriers and providing institutional incentives.
- Establish explicit and consistent mechanisms to systematically integrate research activities into the teaching modules, reinforcing the link between teaching and research.
- Systematically document and utilize student feedback to enhance teaching quality and curriculum development, ensuring direct and tangible improvements in teaching methodologies.

- Introduce clear strategic objectives and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to formalize faculty involvement in community service, aligning the department's practices with global standards in higher education.
- ☐ Set specific targets for minimum research output, including a tiered minimum citation benchmark per academic rank, encouraging equitable research engagement and enhancing international visibility and competitiveness.
- Encourage and support faculty members' active participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs and international research collaborations to foster professional development and elevate the Department's international academic profile.

Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means 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.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, in order to offer students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as, the necessary general and specific libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communication services, support and counselling services. When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. 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

- Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding specific commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources
- 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

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

Infrastructure and Resources: The Department has sufficient facilities to serve students and carry out educational activities. More specifically, there are 7 classrooms, 1 amphitheater with a capacity of 104 persons, 1 gymnasium for educational use, 9 fully equipped laboratories with modern equipment (e.g. IT infrastructure) that can meet the needs of teaching, training and practice, as well as a multidisciplinary library and 1 Olympic-sized swimming pool. Additionally, the Lamia campus has a student restaurant to provide meals for students. The Department's staff constantly ensures the rational distribution of the existing facilities. Although there is

currently no student dormitory on campus, there are plans to establish one. The Department has also made provisions for designated spaces to host cultural events organized by students, including those featuring traditional dances. These spaces aim to support student engagement in cultural activities. Moreover, the gymnasium included in the Department's premises may also serve as a sports center for the student body for a few hours per day and only be under strict surveillance by a supportive staff member.

Support Services: Students have access to important support services provided by the University of Thessaly, such as the Student Counseling Services of the Laboratory of Psychology and Applications in Education, which offers the opportunity for students from all departments of the University of Thessaly to receive psychological assistance, the Support Services for Students with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs – 'Prosvasi' ('Access') and the Gender Equality Committee (GEC). Additionally, a Student Welfare Office operates within the facilities.

Administrative Support: The administrative staff consists of 9 members. They facilitate the administrative processes related to students, teaching, and the operation of the department's laboratories. What is more, the Department has an online secretariat to assist students' requests submitted online.

Communication and Awareness: The students appear to be adequately informed about all the available services, offices and facilities. Thus, the institution provides clear and accessible informational materials (both digital and in print), including promotional material posted on the Department's website. More specifically, students are informed about the services provided from the first day of their academic journey through an informational meeting organized by the Department to welcome first-year students. Students are also regularly informed via emails sent from the administration office directly to their institutional email accounts. Additionally, the Department's website is updated regularly. There, students can find all the necessary files they need to stay informed about the services and facilities offered by the department.

II. Analysis

The institution has adequate resources to support learning and academic activities, providing students with the highest quality education. These resources include essential libraries, access to electronic databases, classrooms, educational and scientific equipment, as well as information, communication, support, and counseling services. Furthermore, when distributing resources, the diverse needs of all students are always considered, alongside the move toward student-centered learning and flexible teaching methods. Additionally, support services are organized in ways that suit the institution's context. These services are functional and easily accessible. The Department makes sure that students are aware of all available services. The effectiveness of these services depends heavily on the support of the administrative staff, which is deemed sufficient.

III. Conclusions

The institution's efforts to provide robust learning resources and support services ensure that students receive the necessary support they need throughout their academic journey. Overall, the institution meets the requirements of Principle 7 regarding learning resources and student support. Nevertheless, it is recommended that periodic assessments be conducted to ensure that student needs are satisfied, and that the institutional infrastructure keeps pace with technological advancements. Moreover, the Department should take immediate action to activate the necessary mechanisms for the creation of a student dormitory. A dormitory is urgently needed to house and board students on campus.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- ☐ Conduct periodic assessments to ensure that student needs are satisfied, and that the institutional infrastructure keeps pace with technological advancements.
- ☐ Take immediate action to activate the necessary mechanisms for the creation of a student dormitory.

Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

The 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.

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 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, availability of learning resources and student support. The completion of the fields of National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) should be correct and complete with the exception of the fields that concern graduates in which a null value is registered.

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*

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The Quality Assurance Policy of the Department of Physiotherapy is aligned with the operational standards of the University of Thessaly (UTH) as defined by the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), aiming to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching.

MODIP operates as a central body responsible for coordinating and supporting of the University's quality assurance processes through the Internal Quality Assurance System.

The Department has established an Internal Evaluation Team (OMEA), composed of three faculty members tasked with certifying the quality of educational processes, research endeavors, and departmental administration, as well as recommending improvements.

MODIP and OMEA are responsible for the internal evaluation process, including the completion and submission of indicator values for the preparation of the annual achievements report. The department has undergone annual internal evaluations from 2019 to 2023.

OMEA is also responsible for updating the information system of the MODIP and the Integrated National Quality Information System (OPESP) of the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) with the Department's quality data.

The Information System of the Quality Assurance Unit collects data from both the UTH Information Systems and the academic community to facilitate the completion of the data required by the OPESP system of HAHE.

To automate the data collection process as much as possible, the system is interconnected with the University's systems, including the Student Register (Electronic Secretariat), the e-class platform, the Interconnection service program and the graduate registration database.

The centrally collected quality data includes key performance indicators related to the profile of the student body, student attendance, academic performance and progression, evolution of the number of graduates for each academic year, duration of studies, numbers of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students and details of internships.

The evaluation of teachers by students is carried out annually through questionnaires in accordance with the instructions of HAHE. Students of the Department are invited to answer a special questionnaire for each course which is divided into two parts (5-point Likert scale). The first part includes five [5] sections and more specifically: the course, the assignments, the teachers, the laboratories, and the student's self-assessment regarding his obligations towards the course being taught. The second part consists of a series of questions where the students record their opinions (comments) about the courses and teachers.

OMEA strives to maximize student participation in the evaluation process, and students are encouraged to submit their feedback. Additionally, the students interviewed by the panel were aware of the OMEAs function and expressed satisfaction with the work of the Department. However, the percentage of students who choose to participate in course evaluations remains low.

The survey data are automatically collected, analyzed and the results are used by the internal audits (OMEA), contributing to the Unit's KPIs. Key performance data relating to the Study Program is also exploited in the Department's strategic planning. Information relating to the Study Program, timetabling and other activities of the Department is made available to students on the Department's website.

II. Analysis

The Department of Physiotherapy, in collaboration with the University's Quality Assurance Unit, has established a robust information management system and procedures to document full compliance with study program requirements and to support continuous improvement in higher education. All key performance indicators are monitored, and a complete comprehensive report is submitted to the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

III. Conclusions

The Department is fully compliant regarding the collection, analysis and use of information for the organization and operation of its Undergraduate Study Program.

The panel evaluates the necessary improvements as being of minor importance, thereby justifying the opinion that the unit is fully compliant with this principle. Nevertheless, the student evaluation program needs to be strengthened by finding ways to increase student participation.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Collection, analysis and use of information for the organisation and operation of new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Increase student participation in course evaluations.

Principle 9: 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.

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*

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The EEAP findings confirm the available online Public Information about the New UGP (website <https://physio.uth.gr>), official communication channel, and communication and projection regulation.

The departmental website includes the required segment devoted to the new UGP presented in Greek and English languages.

The website provides a comprehensive range of information aimed at various groups and stakeholders, including prospective students, current students, faculty, alumni and industry partners.

The website consists of two (2) main sections: In the first section on the top right, there are three thematic subsections (Announcements, e-Services, Useful Documents), while immediately below, in the second one, there are six (6) main thematic subsections about: The department, Staff, Study, Research, Students, Study Support, News, Alumni, Contact.

There is a welcome presentation of the history, location, and profile of the Department and a Photo Gallery. Additionally, the Department's Quality Assurance Policy, the General Assembly, the Department's Committees, as well as the staff name list and details of the CVs of the Department Staff, Laboratory Teaching Personnel, Technical Personnel, Contract Tutors, Administrative Personnel and Honorary Doctorates are publicly available.

A series of links are available that include useful student information (Academic Calendar, Undergraduate Program, Weekly Timetable, BIP, Erasmus+, Accessibility Centre for Disabled Students, Student's Welfare Office, Student Activities, Eudoxus-Books, Entrance Exams for Graduates) and Study Support (e-Services, Quality Assurance Unit, Computer Centre, Library,

Useful Documents), Alumni and Job Openings. Key information includes program details, admission information and research opportunities (Research Labs, Research Programs, Students' Research Activity, Awards & Distinctions).

The academic unit publishes key documents that provide depth and clarity to the information presented on the website. These include information materials, updates on events and important announcements (Secretariat Announcements, Committees Announcements, Undergraduate Announcements, Ph.D. Announcements) policies and regulations (Mobility Regulations -ERASMUS, Undergraduate Program Awards Regulation) Guides (First-Year Student Guide, Internal Regulations for the Undergraduate Program, Regulations of Undergraduate Program, Short Study Guide, Temporary Teaching Staff Guide, Thesis Guide, Guide for Clinical Practice, Regulation of Management of Complaint, Internship Guide, Study Guide – Ph.D. Program, Guide of Communication & Department's Promotion), Secretariat Documents (Application for Registration in the Department, Application for Placement in the Department), Ph.D. Documents, News (official communication channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOpvwGTUXbFZm9HsaUpRfeA>)).

The information presented is objective and clear, with content that appears to be regularly reviewed and curated. The language is straightforward, and the presentation is user-friendly, ensuring regular updates.

II. Analysis

The website of the Department of Physiotherapy functions as a dynamic and user-friendly platform that provides meaningful information, in Greek and English version, to its stakeholders.

By focusing on clear communication, relevant resources, and regular updates, the website effectively supports the academic mission of the institution and engages its community.

III. Conclusions

The Department has fulfilled its obligations toward the provision of public information and is considered fully compliant.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- None.

Principle 10: 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.

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)
- Results of the annual internal evaluation of the study programme by the QAU and the relevant minutes

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

Overview of the Undergraduate Program (UGP): The Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly is a new department, but has a significant history as it is an evolution of the Department of Physiotherapy that was initially founded at the TEI of Lamia in 1994 and later at the TEI of Central Greece. It has a history of more than 25 years and is well established both in the local community and in the rest of the country. The teaching staff has many years of educational and professional experience. The graduates of the Department meet all the requirements for registration in the Panhellenic Association of Physiotherapists and can enjoy all the professional rights of the sector.

The Physiotherapy Department's 4 years UGP was established in 2019 by a three-member faculty committee. No major reforms have been made as the Senate of the University of Thessaly recommends avoiding curriculum changes before a five-year cycle is completed. A full

program evaluation was scheduled to be after the 2022-2023 academic year, when the first cohort graduates.

Internal Evaluation Process: The Internal Evaluation Team (OMEA), appointed in 2021, oversees evaluation and reporting. OMEA Members are: Nikolaos Stribakos (Professor, President), Kortianou Eleni (Associate Professor) and Poulis Ioannis (Associate Professor).

Sources of Evaluation Data:

- Student feedback through biannual electronic surveys.
- Faculty course census sheets.
- Faculty reports and discussions with department committees and internship providers.
- Graduate and employer feedback (introduced from 2023).

Continuous Monitoring and Feedback Tools: The Curriculum Committee maintains communication with faculty, students, and external stakeholders. A systematic quality evaluation occurs every four years, and the findings are reported to the Assembly of Department.

Student and Stakeholder Involvement: Students from all years contribute feedback via curriculum discussions and anonymous faculty/course evaluations through structured surveys. The Internship Committee (PSC) evaluates student performance in clinical placements. The Internship organizations and employers provide structured input to align the program with job market demands. The graduate and employer feedback was integrated from 2023. Plans are in place to develop formal learning outcome assessment tools.

Tools for Evaluating Courses and Learning Outcomes:

Student Feedback Questionnaire, covers 22 key questions related to:

- Course quality (9 questions)
- Teacher performance (5 questions)
- Distance education (2 questions)
- Lab work (3 questions)
- Student self-evaluation (2 questions)

Assessment of Learning Outcomes: Currently under development, as the first student cohort has not yet completed the program. This systematic process ensures continuous curriculum improvement by integrating student, faculty, and industry feedback while maintaining academic and professional relevance.

Decision-Making and Program Improvement: The Department Assembly meets twice a month to review reports and make decisions. The Internship Committee (PSC) gathers feedback from clinical partners to improve practical training, and the Annual strategic meetings define priorities for the upcoming academic year.

Annual Internal Evaluation by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU): The Internal Evaluation Team (OMEA) is responsible for conducting the annual evaluation of the Undergraduate Program (UGP). The evaluation data is collected through biannual student questionnaires (course and faculty evaluations), course census sheets from faculty members, discussions with faculty committees (Internship Committee, Education Office, etc.) and the feedback from graduates and employers (introduced in 2023).

Collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU):

The OMEA works closely with the QAU of the University of Thessaly. The Annual Internal Evaluation Report is prepared and shared with faculty and administration, and the University's special information system (MODIP) is used for documentation.

II. Analysis

Internal Evaluations: The Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly, based in Lamia, was founded in 2019 as an evolution of the TEI of Lamia. It has a modern curriculum that leads to recognized professional rights. The annual internal evaluations (2019-2023) show that the Department faces significant *challenges, such as:*

1. Lack of institutionalized clinical training spaces.
1. A large number of students in relation to the limited teaching staff. (Notice, in recent years the student admission in the program has decreased).
2. Low funding.

The evaluation of teachers by students is carried out annually through questionnaires, in accordance with the instructions of HAHE.

Identified Strengths and Challenges:

Strengths

- Strong faculty expertise and experience.
- Close collaboration with stakeholders, private and the public sector as well as the European universities (via the Erasmus Program).
- Emphasis on scientific advancements and labor market needs.

Challenges:

- Low student participation in evaluations.
- Lack of formal assessment tools for student competencies.
- Need for ongoing and up-to-date syllabus adjustments.

Planned Strategies for Improvements:

- Introduction of learning outcome assessment tools.
- Strengthening partnerships with stakeholders, the private and the public sector as well as the academia.
- Encouraging student engagement through faculty involvement, website postings, and promotional materials.
- Enhancing course content through monitoring of scientific trends and labor market demands.
- Strengthening practical training through partnerships with hospitals, clinics, and rehabilitation centers.
- Adopting best practices from international collaborations (Erasmus Program).

III. Conclusions

The EEAP panel concludes that the Physiotherapy Department's internal evaluation process ensures continuous improvement, balancing academic standards, student experiences, and labor market demands/needs with systematic internal reviews, stakeholder feedback, and strategic curriculum adjustments. The Department reinforces and makes regular efforts to

maintain the quality and relevance of the Undergraduate Program of Physiotherapy within the guidelines of HAHE.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- Improve faculty support, student participation and external collaborations to ensure and maintain the continuous development and high educational standards of the undergraduate program.

Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programmes

The new undergraduate study programmes should regularly undergo evaluation by panels of external experts set by HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The results of the external evaluation and accreditation are used for the continuous improvement of the Institutions, academic units and study programmes. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.

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

- *Progress report on the results from the utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution and of the IQAS Accreditation Report.*

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly, based in Lamia, was founded in 2019 as an evolution of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Lamia. It has a modern curriculum that leads to recognized professional rights and has undergone annual internal evaluations (2019–2023) but has not undergone any recent External Evaluation and Accreditation. The last external evaluation reported by the Department of Physiotherapy dates back to 2011 and concerns the former Department of Physiotherapy at TEI in Lamia.

II. Analysis

The integration of the TEI of Lamia within the University of Thessaly has led to improvements in academic offerings and faculty expertise. The Department of Physiotherapy has the advantage of being in the center of the country, in the city of Lamia, which attracts students from all over Greece.

Although it is a new Department, it has a significant history behind it, as it is an evolution of the Department of Physiotherapy that was originally founded at the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) in Lamia in 1994 and continued at the Technological Educational Institute (TEI)

in central Greece. It has a history of more than 25 years, and its teachers have many years of educational and professional experience.

The Department seems to have worked with quality assurance, but exactly how extensive the effects are on the undergraduate program was not easily measurable.

The 2011 external evaluation report as the 2019-2023 annual internal evaluations seem to have laid a strong foundation for the recent improvements in basic education in the physiotherapy program, but it is not clear whether all these changes have been fully implemented.

III. Conclusions

Although recently specific completed accreditation reports for the Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly do not exist, the University has demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence. The integration of TEI Lamia into the University of Thessaly indicates a strategic move that has contributed to improved undergraduate program quality and has aligned with national and international accreditation standards.

Panel Judgement

Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- None.

Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programmes to the New Ones

Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programmes to new ones, in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Standards.

Applies in cases where the department implements, in addition to the new UGPs, any pre-existing UGPs from departments of former Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) or from departments that were merged / renamed / abolished.

Institutions should implement procedures for the transition from former UGPs to new ones, in order to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Standards. More specifically, the institution and the academic unit must have a) the necessary learning resources, b) appropriate teaching staff, c) structured curriculum (courses, ECTS, learning outcomes), d) study regulations, award of diploma and diploma supplement, and e) system of data collection and use, with particular reference to the data of the graduates of the pre-existing UGP. In this context, the Institutions and the academic units prepare a plan for the foreseen transition period of the existing UGP until its completion, the costs caused to the Institution by its operation as well as possible measures and proposals for its smooth delivery and termination. This planning includes data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of the academic unit, as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status.

Relevant documentation

- The planning of the Institution for the foreseen transition period, the operating costs and the specific measures or proposals for the smooth implementation and completion of the programme
- The study regulations, template for the degree and the diploma supplement
- Name list of teaching staff, status, subject and the course they teach /examine
- Report of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the progress of the transition and the degree of completion of the programme. In the case of UGP of a former Technological Educational Institution (TEI), the report must include a specific reference to how the internship was implemented

Study Programme Compliance

Please comment on the compliance with the Principle. Specifically: Please describe the findings related to the Principle, analyse, and conclude your judgement. Findings, analysis of judgement and conclusions should be developed below in three distinct parts.

I. Findings

The Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly, according to its founding law (article 22, Law 4589/29-01-2019), is a new academic department and there is no provision for the implementation of transition procedures from an older undergraduate program. In the new Department, all the procedures for the integration of the staff (FACULTY, EDIP, ETEP, and other staff) of the former TEI of Central Greece (as described in articles 9, 10 and 11 of the aforementioned law) have been completed.

The building infrastructure and facilities remain the same as those of the former TEI of Central Greece.

The educational operation of the Physiotherapy program at the former TEI continues temporarily until enrolled students graduate.

The new Department of Physiotherapy of the University of Thessaly offers an Equivalency Program, allowing graduates of the former TEI to obtain a university degree.

The Equivalency Program has been established for the acquisition of a university degree by graduates of the former TEI, with recognition of 35 courses and 199 ECTS. An additional 11 bridging courses (43 ECTS credits) are required for full academic equivalency.

II. Analysis

The University of Thessaly has organized a gradual structured transition process for graduates of the former TEI, allowing them to obtain a university degree through assimilation.

There is a clear distinction between the old and new curricula, thus the students already studying the undergraduate program at the former TEI are not affected.

The distinction between the old and new curricula maintains academic integrity while providing continuity for existing TEI students.

The Equivalency Program serves as a bridge for TEI graduates, allowing them to obtain a university-level qualification without disrupting their academic progress.

The allocation of ECTS credits and course matching ensures transparency and academic alignment between the two programs.

III. Conclusions

The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Thessaly is newly established and does not require a transition from an older program. A structured transition framework allows students from the former TEI to either complete their studies or upgrade to a university-level degree. A bridging program ensures academic equivalency for TEI graduates, enhancing their career prospects. The transition process is well-organized, adheres to national education standards and legal provisions, and supports the seamless integration of the department into the University of Thessaly.

Panel Judgement

Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programmes to the new ones	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

- None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

Please state aspects of good practice identified, with regard to the new undergraduate study programme in operation.

- The undergraduate study program “Physiotherapy” successfully meets health care needs.
- The Department of Physiotherapy is well organized, has modern facilities and is equipped with excellent infrastructure.
- The Department of Physiotherapy has high level of acceptance and tight links with the local society.
- After its evaluation and upgrade to university level, the Department of Physiotherapy has substantially improved in many indexes, including the comprehensiveness of the undergraduate study program and the development of a research orientation.
- The Department of Physiotherapy has an excellent reputation among professionals and outside,
- Graduates of the Department of Physiotherapy have excellent theoretical background and practical skills.
- The undergraduate study program “Physiotherapy” offers important courses such as “Research Methodology”, “Biostatistics”, “Entrepreneurship” and “Bioethics”, which strengthen its research orientation and link to the job market.
- The students have excellent opportunities for practical training in health care facilities affiliated with the Department of Physiotherapy.
- The EEAP panel noted an excellent community spirit within the faculty and students of the Department of Physiotherapy, which is also illustrated in several outreach activities in the local society.
- The faculty of the Department of Physiotherapy takes advantage of faculty development opportunities offered by KEDIMA.
- The educational process in the undergraduate study program “Physiotherapy” is not restricted to classical ex cathedra teaching, but also involves additional modern, interactive approaches.

II. Areas of Weakness

Please state weak areas identified, with regard to the new undergraduate study programme in operation.

- The goal setting of the Department of Physiotherapy requires revision and update.
- The EEAP panel feels that faculty development seminars from KEDIMA should be compulsory, and attendance should be a criterion for promotion.

- The EEAP panel was concerned with the relatively low participation of students in course evaluations.
- The EEAP panel noted a lack of mapping of learning outcomes.
- The role of physiotherapy in mental health is not sufficiently addressed in the undergraduate study program.
- There was a discussion among EEAP panel members on whether a diploma thesis should be compulsory.
- Even though indexes of faculty research output (such as citations numbers) are increasing, the overall research output remains relatively modest and should be improved.
- There is a need for more extramural funding and operating grants to improve the research output of the Department of Physiotherapy.
- There is a need to develop safety protocols and action plans during student exercise and training in the laboratories.
- There is a need for action plans for further development and maintenance of departmental infrastructure via partnerships with the private sector.
- There was a discussion among EEAP panel members on whether the “Entrepreneurship” course should be compulsory.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Please make any specific recommendations for development.

- Expand research funding sources and ensure contribution of all faculty members.
- Enhance collaborations with international institutions.
- Strengthen the documentation and systematic monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable more precise assessment and targeted improvement of quality assurance practices.
- Expand the involvement of the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) beyond student evaluations by incorporating evaluation of course design, delivery, and alignment of Learning Outcomes (LOs) with the EQF and NQF standards.
- Establish a structured mechanism for systematically integrating student evaluation feedback into curriculum revisions and instructional adjustments.
- Expand the current comprehensive faculty development program, incorporating a more formal pedagogical training on a compulsory basis, including peer mentoring, to standardize and enhance teaching quality and innovation across the department.
- Develop additional KPIs specifically aimed at improving research performance and recognition, including mandatory participation in international research consortia and securing competitive European research grants (e.g., Horizon Europe).

- Introduce tiered citation targets per academic rank, aligned with international benchmarks, to ensure balanced and equitable research productivity among faculty members.
- Formulate a strategic objective explicitly addressing the USP's societal contribution to align more closely with the broader institutional mission and global academic best practices.
- Establish a formal, structured mapping process explicitly connecting module content, learning outcomes, and assessment methods, ensuring clear alignment with Bloom's taxonomy, EQF, and NQF (Level 6).
- Introduce a compulsory core course on entrepreneurship and professional practice management to address the significant skills gap identified by students regarding business-oriented competencies.
- Consider implementing additional certified training in academic skills within or supplementary to the curriculum, enhancing students' academic readiness and adaptability to professional challenges.
- Continue the established good regulatory practice and follow possible developments of the European system of higher education.
- Further strengthen and formalize workload management policies to clearly allocate dedicated research time, particularly for faculty members demonstrating strong research potential and productivity.
- Implement structured, compulsory professional development programs for teaching staff, emphasizing pedagogical training, innovative teaching methodologies, academic writing, and grant application skills.
- Actively promote and facilitate increased participation in faculty mobility schemes, particularly through Erasmus+, by removing administrative barriers and providing institutional incentives.
- Establish explicit and consistent mechanisms to systematically integrate research activities into the teaching modules, reinforcing the link between teaching and research.
- Systematically document and utilize student feedback to enhance teaching quality and curriculum development, ensuring direct and tangible improvements in teaching methodologies.
- Introduce clear strategic objectives and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to formalize faculty involvement in community service, aligning the department's practices with global standards in higher education.
- Set specific targets for minimum research output, including a tiered minimum citation benchmark per academic rank, encouraging equitable research engagement and enhancing international visibility and competitiveness.

- Encourage and support faculty members' active participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs and international research collaborations to foster professional development and elevate the department's international academic profile.
- Conduct periodic assessments to ensure that student needs are satisfied, and that the institutional infrastructure keeps pace with technological advancements.
- Take immediate action to activate the necessary mechanisms for the creation of a student dormitory.
- Increase student participation in course evaluations.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

3, 6

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

Not applicable

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

Not applicable

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. Prof. Konstantinos Pantopoulos
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