Policy for Staff Support and Development of the Transnational Inter-Institutional Postgraduate Program "Digital Governance of Educational Institutions"

of the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education (the coordinating department) of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Patras,

in collaboration with the Department of Education of the School of Education Sciences of the University of Nicosia and the Department of Digital Innovation of the School of Business Administration of the University of Nicosia.

Policy for the Support, Development and Evaluation of the Staff of the Postgraduate Program

The policy of the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, and consequently of the Transnational Inter-Institutional Postgraduate Program, is based on the fundamental principle that human resources constitute the decisive factor for the quality of academic operation. Within this framework, the Department adopts a coherent and long-term strategy that strengthens the academic, research, and pedagogical work of faculty members, creating the conditions for continuous scientific engagement, professional development, and international presence. This strategy is organically integrated into the quality assurance and excellence objectives of the University of Patras and aims at the continuous renewal of the knowledge, skills, and practices of teaching staff, for the benefit of both the educational process and the broader academic and social mission of the Department.

An important element for the professional development of teaching staff is the operation of the Center for Teaching and Learning Support (KEDIMA). The University of Patras was the first higher education institution in Greece to establish such a center (in 2016), with the aim of supporting the professional development of teaching staff and improving teaching quality. The Center for Teaching and Learning Support (KEDIMA) offers various types of programs, including programs for specific groups of teaching staff (such as newly appointed faculty members and contract-based teaching staff), programs organized upon request by academic departments, and ad hoc programs for the implementation of specific teaching tools, techniques, and methods. Examples include programs aimed at improving the digital skills of teaching staff, as well as the effective design and implementation of distance learning instruction, the management of digital learning environments, and the utilization of synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods, the application of collaborative and student-centered methods, and the implementation of innovative teaching approaches such as the flipped classroom model. KEDIMA operates in specially equipped facilities and supports face-to-face, online, and hybrid training programs. To date, it has developed ten educational material packages for university education and participates in European networks aimed at improving university teaching. It should be noted that KEDIMA is directly linked to quality assurance procedures, as it operates within the framework of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) and aligns with all components of the Institutional Quality Assurance System of the University.

Within this context, the policy of the Department, and consequently of the Postgraduate Program, encourages the participation of faculty members in the following activities:

1. The institutional support and encouragement of the use of educational and research leave (sabbatical), in accordance with the applicable legal framework, as a tool for academic renewal, deepening of research, development of international collaborations, and transfer of knowledge, with tangible impact on both research and teaching activities.
2. Active support for the participation of faculty members in the internal competitive research funding program “Karatheodoris,” implemented by the University of Patras and aimed at promoting original research, supporting early-career researchers, and creating dynamic research teams with an international orientation.
3. Encouragement of the integration of research outcomes produced during sabbatical leave or through the “Karatheodoris” program into teaching, through the incorporation of contemporary research findings, case studies, and innovative practices in the Postgraduate Program.

At the same time, the Department:

- fosters a culture of active participation of faculty members in professional development programmes offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning Support (KEDIMA), with particular emphasis on training in distance education, digital pedagogy, and the use of educational technologies.
- encourages the systematic participation of teaching staff in training activities related to instructional design for distance education, digital assessment methods, student engagement in online learning environments, and the pedagogical utilization of digital technologies in higher education.
- institutionally and administratively facilitates participation in Erasmus mobility programs, international networks, research collaborations, and scientific conferences.
- promotes the adoption of international best practices in distance education and digital pedagogy through participation in academic networks, conferences, and collaborative initiatives.
- recognizes and promotes excellence in teaching and research through participation and distinction of faculty members in initiatives such as the “MEDICOS” program, the Award for Excellence in Teaching “Evangelos Papanoutsos,” and the Award for Excellence in Publication “Panagiotis Kanellopoulos.”

The training of administrative staff, aimed at improving their effectiveness and efficiency, is supported through their participation in:

1. Training seminars organized by the Institute of Training of the National School of Public Administration, following their application and approval by their supervisor.
2. Specialized training seminars related to their field of work, organized by the University whenever necessary (e.g., training in the use of new information systems or administrative management systems).
3. Workshops, seminars, and other educational activities related to quality assurance, relevant procedures, and best practices.
4. The opportunity to attend non-formal professional training programs organized by the Center for Lifelong Learning (KEDIVIM) with a 15% reduction in tuition fees.
5. Administrative staff mobility programs for training (Erasmus+). The selection of participants follows a specific procedure based on selection criteria, which forms part of the call for expressions of interest.

The postgraduate program ensures the continuous training and support of teaching and administrative staff in matters related to the design, organization, and implementation of distance education, with the aim of ensuring a high-quality learning experience. The effectiveness of staff training and development actions is periodically reviewed through internal quality assurance procedures and feedback collected from teaching staff and students.

The policy for the support and development of the staff of the postgraduate program is published on the website of the program (https://dgei.upatras.gr/?page_id=855).