

1.1. Declaration of Quality Policy

The School of Early Childhood Education (hereafter SECEd) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki provides a high-quality training in the field of early childhood education and care. SECEd promotes the development of a creative and democratic working environment for its employees, loyal to the basic principles of academia. For the holistic achievement of these goals, SECEd is committed to the proper development and monitoring of an internal quality assurance system. It supervises systematically and improves the quality of its procedures and main functions by applying predefined processes and systems. More specifically, SECEd evaluates periodically its strategic goals in accordance with the quality assurance policy of SECEd. It also takes under consideration the current scientific demands, the teaching needs, and the National and European educational framework. The Quality Assurance policy of SECEd ensures the constant improvement of its strategic goals by defining the means to assess them and to meet them. The end result of such quality assurance procedures is the constant improvement of the quality of the provided education SECEd offers to its students. The principles that describe the quality assurance policy, the ways to implement it, and the desired outcomes are the pillars that influence every dimension of the School's function.

The quality assurance policy of SECEd is in harmony with the broader quality assurance policy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and it promotes the academic character and the scientific orientation of the Department:

- (a) It promotes the purpose and the content of the undergraduate program in early childhood education and care,
- (b) It develops and promotes educational sciences in early childhood education through its academic research and teaching, and
- (c) It provides to its graduates a high quality scientific and professional training that will enable them to contribute to the further development of early childhood pedagogy and to have all the required skills for a successful career.

1.1.1 Main principles and implementation methods of the quality assurance policy of SECEd

In the context of developing and achieving its strategic goals, SECEd applies all the necessary quality assurance procedures in order to constantly improve its overall function and its undergraduate program. The main principles of the quality assurance policy of the School are to:

1. Conduct an annual review of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate program. This review is executed from the Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA), in order to ensure the organization and the appropriateness of the undergraduate program.
2. Examine the compatibility of the learning outcomes and skills of the courses with the National Qualification Framework of Higher Education and by taking under consideration the official results of the six-month/semester evaluation of the courses (MODIP/AUTH), the quality assurance policy ensures the quality of academic teaching and its student-centered orientation.
3. Ensure that its graduates acquire the professional skills and qualifications that are considered necessary for a contemporary educator through the participation in an extended Practicum program, the connection of teaching and research and an undergraduate program that addresses the multiple challenges and fields of the educational sciences.

4. Ensure the appropriate qualifications of the teaching staff and the promotion of the quality of research of the academic staff through the annual self-evaluation report of SECE addressed to MODIP.
5. Ensure the smooth implementation of the weekly courses program, the upload of the teaching staff cooperation with students' hours and the accessibility to academic counselors throughout the semester.
6. Ensure that the School's website is of high quality and constantly updated with validated and contemporary information (SECEd Website Committee),
7. Connect teaching with research through the participation of the academic staff in national and international research projects and the participation of undergraduate students in the research labs of SECE and the writing of research assignments in the undergraduate courses; also, with the participation of undergraduate students in conferences and the optional writing of a bachelor thesis. One main pursuit of the SECEd is to systematically disseminate the research findings and publications of the academic staff to its undergraduate students.
8. Empower the mobility of both academic staff and students (Erasmus exchange committee),
9. Promote and encourage the cooperation with other Departments/Schools of the Aristotle University, as well as with other Early Childhood Education Departments/Schools within Greece or abroad.
10. Improve the quality of the overall provided services and facilities to the students, such as the administrative services, the libraries and the social support structures,
11. Enhance the cooperation with the local community and the broader society through a wide variety of activities offered as voluntary open access activities to the public.

The quality assurance policy of SECEd fully complies with the criteria specified in articles 72.1 and 72.2 of the Law 4009/2011. All its academic and administrative staff and structures, as well as the students, participate in the planning and the implementation of its quality assurance policy. Responsible for the coordination and the successful implementation of the quality assurance policy is the Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA), which systematically cooperates to this end with the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). The quality assurance policy has been planned and is being implemented and constantly reviewed taking under consideration the quality assurance policy of the AUTH, aiming to be fully harmonized with it. Furthermore, the strategic planning of SECE and its implementation, including the quality assurance policy, aim to contribute to and enhance the overall strategic planning of AUTH.

1.2. Planning of targets and activities at SECEd

The planning of targets and activities related to the quality assurance policy of the undergraduate curriculum of SECE is realized in accordance with the implemented legislation and the Internal System of Quality Assurance (ESDP) of AUTH. The SECEd's Committee for Undergraduate Studies and its Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) play a key role for the planning and implementation of those activities. The composition of SECE's Committee for Undergraduate Studies and the Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) is suggested by the President and approved by the General Assembly of the School.

- A. The SECE's Committee for Undergraduate Studies examines all issues that arise from the implementation of the undergraduate program. Specifically, the Committee:
- Monitors, registers and makes good use of any developments taking place in similar Departments/Schools of other Universities, both in Greece and abroad
 - Makes suggestions to the General Assembly on the organization and remodeling of the undergraduate program

- Handles and solves problems that may appear during the implementation of the undergraduate program
 - Takes jointly into account the students' evaluation of the undergraduate study program, as well as the teaching staff's feedback on the teaching process and it intervenes through a consultative process to the teaching staff, if necessary
 - Proposes to the General Assembly changes that enhance and improve the quality of the curriculum, considering national and international good practices.
- B. The Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) of SECEd:
- Designs, plans, and coordinates the evaluation procedures of the School's undergraduate program and works closely with the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) of AUTH
 - Encourages the academic staff and students' participation in the evaluation procedures
 - Participates in the collection and submission of data to the Integrated National Quality Information System (EQF) of the Assurance Authority and Quality Certification in Higher Education (ADIP),
 - Participates in the process of data collection and submission on the OPESP (Total National Information System of Quality (TNISQ) of ADIP, ie the Assurance Authority and Quality Certification in Higher Education. It monitors the data that has been submitted by the members of staff of the school/department, regarding their administrative, teaching and research work, the evaluations of the courses by students and the evaluations of graduates.
 - Monitors the participation of SECEd in the status indicators of AUTH on a national and an international level,
- C. SECEd conducts an annual evaluation of the Undergraduate Study Programme in order to improve the quality of the educational process, based on its strategic objectives of the School and the quality aims that specify the quality outcomes for each strategic goal. Furthermore, every quality objective is evaluated on the basis of specific indicators and in correlation with the target value as defined for every quality target (the aims of SECEd are presented in detail in B6 of the current proposal). The Annual Internal Evaluation of the School takes place, under the coordination of OMEA and MODIP, with the assistance of all bodies and committees of the School and the individual members of staff.
- D. The external evaluation of the undergraduate study programme of SECEd is carried out by HAHE (Hellenic Authority for Higher Education) in collaboration with MODIP of AUTH. The School makes use of the conclusions and suggestions of the external evaluation committee systematically (for details see 10.1 and 10.2)

1.3. Publication of the Quality Policy of SECEd

SECEd follows the principles of quality policy that apply to all of AUTH and are accessible to all (https://www.nured.auth.gr/dp7nured/?q=el/quality_policies_el). During the first weeks of each new academic year a special welcoming event is held for all new students, where the Head and the of the School's staff inform them about the quality policy of the School. Such a practice is followed by staff members during classes as well. Furthermore, SECEd communicates its quality policy at meetings with professional bodies involved in the students' internship programs, at meetings with members of research teams in which members of staff participate, at local and international conferences, and at meetings with other relevant Schools within and outside Greece (eg in the context of ERASMUS programs).