

D6.5 - Staff support and development policy-EN

**Joint Degree of Master of Science in Marine Policy, Seafood Business Management & Marketing
(MPSea)**

“Marine Policy, Seafood Business Management & Marketing (MPSea)”

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

University of Patras

Ενιαίο Διακρατικό Διατμηματικό Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών

Τμήμα Αλιείας και Υδατοκαλλιεργειών

Σχολή Γεωπονικών Επιστημών

Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών

Σε συνεργασία με τα:

Oswego State University of New York, SUNY Oswego, USA

University of Alaska, Southeast, Fairbanks, Alaska, USA

Item	Description
Deliverable Code	D6.5
Title	Published Policy for Staff Support & Development in Distance Education
Implementing Organization	Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Patras
Partner Institutions	SUNY Oswego (USA) University of Alaska Southeast (USA)
Scientific Coordinator	Professor Ioannis Theodorou
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1. Introduction

The MPSea Master's Degree Programme is organized and operates exclusively in the form of distance learning (75% synchronous and 25% asynchronous), in accordance with Joint Ministerial Decree 18137/Z1/16.2.2023. The successful operation of such a program requires the excellent training and continuous education of the staff involved in the educational process, both at the pedagogical and technological level.

This policy concerns all staff involved, namely the faculty members of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the University of Patras, the faculty members and scientific staff of the collaborating American universities SUNY Oswego and University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), as well as the administrative and technical staff that support the operation of the program.

2. Institutional Framework

The policy of support and development of the staff of the “MPSea” DIPMS in distance education issues is based on the following institutional framework:

- Law 4957/2022 “New Horizons in Higher Education Institutions”, and in particular article 88 on digital skills of teaching staff, as well as article 83 on categories of teachers.
- Joint Ministerial Decree 18137/Z1/16.2.2023 on the organization of distance education in Postgraduate Studies Programs.
- Call for Funding “Internationalization of educational services of HEIs” (Recovery and Resilience Fund “Greece 2.0”), which explicitly provides for the development of digital skills of teaching staff as an eligible expense.
- Policies of the collaborating American institutions SUNY Oswego and University of Alaska Southeast on issues of distance learning, cybersecurity and management of digital educational materials.
- Regulations of Operation of the MPSea Program and the Program Study Guide.

3. Principles and Objectives of the Policy

The staff support policy is governed by the following fundamental principles:

3.1 Principles

- Continuity and sustainability: Staff support is an ongoing process and not a one-off action.
- Equality of access: All staff members, regardless of technological experience, have access to appropriate support programs.
- International harmonization: The policy incorporates practices from all three collaborating institutions (University of Patras, SUNY Oswego, UAS).

- Quality of educational experience: The central objective is to improve the quality of the educational experience for students through the development of staff competencies.
- Data protection and cybersecurity: Staff are informed and trained on issues of personal data protection (FERPA/GDPR) and digital security.

3.2 Objectives

- Ensuring high quality synchronous and asynchronous distance learning.
- Effective utilization of available digital tools and platforms (Zoom, eClass, D2L Brightspace, Google Suite).
- Development of pedagogical skills adapted to the distance learning environment.
- Ensuring the coherence and effectiveness of the educational process between the three institutions.
- Promoting innovation in distance learning and assessment.

4. Staff Training Needs Analysis

Based on the structure and requirements of the “MPSea” DIPMS, the following categories of needs are identified:

4.1 Technological Needs

- Use of Zoom videoconferencing platform: room management, interaction tools, recording and storage of courses.
- Use of Learning Management System (LMS): eClass (University of Patras), D2L Brightspace (SUNY Oswego), Canvas/Blackboard (UAS).
- Creation and posting of digital educational materials (presentations, videos, digital textbooks).
- Digital student assessment (online exams, electronic assignments).
- Cybersecurity and data protection (FERPA for American institutions, GDPR for Europe).

4.2 Pedagogical Needs

- Instructional design for distance learning environments.
- Active learning techniques in modern and asynchronous environments.
- Student assessment in distance learning environments.
- Management of an international academic class with different time zones.

4.3 Organizational/Administrative Needs

- Coordination between three institutions in different time zones (Greece, New York, Alaska).
- Management of academic records and grades through electronic systems.
- Communication and collaboration with students and colleagues remotely.

5. Staff Support and Development Programs

5.1 Onboarding Program

Each new member of teaching or administrative staff involved in the MPSea MPS is required to attend the Onboarding Program, which includes:

- 4-hour introductory seminar on the platforms and tools used by the program (Zoom, eClass/D2L Brightspace).
- Information on the MPSPA Operating Regulations and distance learning policies.
- Information on the data protection policies (GDPR/FERPA) and cybersecurity of the three institutions.
- Practical training in conducting a modern online course.

5.2 Continuing Education Program

The Continuing Education Program is organized twice a year (beginning of the winter and spring semesters) and covers:

a) Technological Training

- Best practices for using Zoom (breakout rooms, polls, whiteboards, annotations).
- Creation of interactive digital content (H5P, Mentimeter, Padlet).
- Development of digital educational material (video lectures, screencasts, podcasts).
- Digital assessment: creation of online quizzes, digital assignments, plagiarism detection (Turnitin).

b) Pedagogical Training

- Course Design for a distance environment according to international standards (Quality Matters, Universal Design for Learning).
- Techniques for maintaining student engagement in a distance classroom.
- Asynchronous teaching: structure, strategies, tools.
- International classroom management: intercultural communication and teaching approaches.

c) Organizational Training

- Use of electronic secretariat (progress.upatras.gr) for recording grades.
- Procedures for remote examination and support of the Master's Thesis.
- Coordination and communication between the three collaborating institutions.

5.3 Support from a Technical Team

The MPSea MSP has dedicated technical support for staff, which is provided through:

- Helpdesk Services of the University of Patras (network center, e-learning service).
- Technical support SUNY Oswego (Technology Support Professional – CBET).
- Technical support UAS (Information Systems Department).
- Internal MSP staff contact list for immediate mutual assistance.
- Online knowledge base (FAQ) for common technological issues, accessible from the MPSea website.

5.4 Participation in Educational and Scientific Organizations

The MPSea “MPSea” framework provides for the participation of staff members in educational and scientific organizations related to distance education. Specifically:

- Participation in up to 10 educational/scientific organizations per year, with the aim of exchanging good practices in distance and digital education.
- Attendance at international conferences and workshops related to e-learning, online education and digital teaching in the field of marine sciences and business.
- Participation in networks for the exchange of best practices in distance education at European and international level.

5.5 Peer Learning Program

To develop a culture of continuous improvement in distance learning, the MPSea Pedagogical and Educational Service Center (PSESC) adopts a peer learning program, which includes:

- Quarterly meetings of teaching staff from all three institutions (remotely) to exchange experiences and good practices.
- “Open lectures”: each teacher can attend lectures by colleagues for pedagogical inspiration.
- Collaborative development of educational materials between teachers from the three institutions.

6. Digital Infrastructures and Support Tools

The MPSea Digital Learning Platform leverages the digital infrastructures of all three collaborating institutions. The following table presents the main tools used by the teaching staff:

Tool/Platform	Institution	Use
Zoom	All three institutions	Synchronous teaching, teleconferencing, remote examinations
eClass (Open eClass)	University of Patras	LMS: content upload, asynchronous learning, announcements
D2L Brightspace	SUNY Oswego	LMS: course management, assessment, communication
Google Suite (Gmail, Drive, Meet)	SUNY Oswego	Communication, file storage and sharing
Blackboard/Canvas	UAS (University of Alaska Southeast)	LMS: support of UAS courses
progress.upatras.gr	University of Patras	Student Information System: grades, course registration, certificates

7. Cybersecurity and Data Protection Policy

Given the exclusively online nature of the MPSea, cybersecurity and data protection are critical components of the staff support policy.

7.1 Mandatory Cybersecurity Training

- UAS requires all employees to complete mandatory cybersecurity training on an annual basis.
- SUNY Oswego implements a cybersecurity policy that covers technology use, student data, and academic records.
- The University of Patras follows the GDPR Regulation (EU 2016/679) for the protection of student and staff personal data.

7.2 FERPA Policy (for US institutions)

- SUNY Oswego FERPA Policy: <https://ww1.oswego.edu/registrar/ferpa-information>
- UAS FERPA Policy: <https://uas.alaska.edu/registrar/academic-records/ferpa.html>

7.3 Management of Files and Course Records

- According to UAS Zoom policy, course recordings in Zoom Cloud are automatically deleted after 730 days of storage.
- SUNY Oswego uses D2L Brightspace for storing educational materials and Google Suite for archives.
- The University of Patras stores educational materials on the eClass platform, adhering to the rules for retaining academic records.

8. Effectiveness Evaluation

The effectiveness of the staff support and development policy is systematically evaluated through:

- An annual evaluation questionnaire completed by all teaching and administrative staff of the DDIPMS.
- Analysis of statistical data on the use of digital platforms (frequency of connection, use of tools, quality of Zoom sessions).
- Evaluation of teaching quality by students (at the end of each semester), with specific questions on the distance learning experience.
- Annual evaluation report of the Steering Committee of the DDIPMS, which includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of educational actions.
- Comparison of results with international distance learning quality indicators (Quality Matters, European Standards for E-Learning).

The results of the evaluation are used for the continuous improvement of the policy and support programs. The Steering Committee reviews this policy at least once a year, taking into account the results of the evaluation and any changes in the institutional framework or available technologies.

9. Disclosure of the Policy

This policy is disclosed through the following channels:

- MPSea website (<https://asfa.upatras.gr/en/mpsea/>): the full text of the policy is posted in Greek and English.
- MPSea Study Guide: a relevant section on the staff support policy is included.
- Websites of the collaborating institutions SUNY Oswego (<https://ww1.oswego.edu/>) and UAS (<https://uas.alaska.edu/>).
- Internal eClass platform of MPSea: the policy is posted for access by all staff members.
- Electronic notification: the policy is sent electronically to all members of the teaching and administrative staff at the beginning of each academic year.

10. Competent Bodies

The following are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy:

- Coordinating Committee (CC) of the DDPMS: responsible for the design, implementation and review of the policy.
- Director of the DDPMS (Assoc. Prof. Ioannis Theodorou): supervising the correct implementation.
- Communication Officers (asfasecr@upatras.gr): first point of contact for staff support issues.
- Technical Services of the University of Patras and corresponding services of SUNY Oswego and UAS: providing technical support.