

**UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

POSTGRADUATE STUDIES INFORMATION GUIDE

2011-2012

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INTRODUCTION

The present guide briefly presents all the necessary information in relation to postgraduate studies at the Department of Early Childhood Education. The Department runs a Master's programme, entitled *Educational Sciences: Pedagogical Play and Educational Material in Early Childhood*. It also offers the possibility of undertaking PhD studies on themes relevant to the Department's subject domains.

The following is a synopsis of more detailed information, included in the Master's Programme Students Guide, the Master's Programme Internal Regulation and the Department Students Guide.

A. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME

A.1. OVERVIEW

The programme, *Educational Sciences: Pedagogical Play and Educational Material in Early Childhood* was funded and is run by the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Thessaly, on the basis of the 49507/B7/13-7-2004 Ministerial Decision of its approval (Official Government Gazette 1133/27-7-2004/v. B), the decision's revision (47550/B7/4-7-2007), the Internal Regulation, approved by the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly on the 18th/14-12-2005, the Postgraduate Studies Regulation of the University of Thessaly, and the legislation in force.

Initially, the programme was funded by the Second Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (2004-2008). Since then, it has been funded through fee payment. It has run in its current form for seven years. In March 2009, following systematic and continuous internal evaluation, the programme was reformed, in order to secure its viability and competitiveness in the job market, especially in the area of Thessaly, and with the aim to keep up with the latest scientific developments and educational needs. The reformed programme has been running since September 2011, following approval by the Ad Hoc Senate and the Ministry of Education.

A.2. AIMS

The scope of the reformed postgraduate studies programme, effective from 2011-12, is to educate scientists coming from different backgrounds on pedagogical play and relevant educational material. The purpose of the programme is to provide specialized knowledge in issues of design, evaluation and instructional use of educational material and pedagogical toys. It further aims at educating students so as to enable them to respond to current and future needs posed by the wide and constantly changing and developing spread of educational material by providing them with theoretical specialization of a high standard and technical knowledge. Furthermore, it aims at providing students with the necessary qualifications, in order for them to be able to take up posts in education, business and research areas and to be able to contribute to the improvement of children's education. Specifically, the programme enhances students' abilities to:

- Evaluate the existing educational material and pedagogical toys
- Grasp with the design of educational material and pedagogical toys and its experimental development
- Propose didactic implementations of the existing and of the developed

educational material and pedagogical toys in the framework of an interdisciplinary approach of knowledge.

Finally, it aims at promoting a mutual interrelation between educational research and didactic practice, two areas, which often operate in isolation from each other.

A.3. STRUCTURE AND RELEVANT INFORMATION

The programme is organised on the basis of course attendance (compulsory and compulsory elective), seminars and the undertaking of a Master's dissertation¹. Each year, 20 students are accepted in the programme and the duration of studies for obtaining the degree is two years (three semesters of compulsory courses and one semester for the writing up of the dissertation).

The teaching period for each course can last up to 12 weeks (three hours per week) and the courses and seminars attendance is compulsory.

The teaching and the exams are conducted in Greek (and in certain cases in English), whereas both Greek and English literature and educational material are used for the needs of the programme.

A.4. COURSES

A.4.1. First semester courses

A.4.1.1. Research Methodology I (C) (ECTS credits: 7, 5)

Main instructor: George Abakoumkin

This course aims at students' training on empirical research methods as well as at their preparation for the course "Research Methodology II" (2nd semester). It is designed in such a way that it can assist students to increase their understanding of research methodology issues, which they have usually already encountered during their undergraduate studies. Furthermore, it includes some specific topics that might be entirely new to students.

More specifically, an introduction to philosophical and epistemological fundamentals of various research approaches is given. This is followed by a presentation of mainstream research methods within the framework of "quantitative" approaches (experimental and non-experimental) as well as methods from the field of "qualitative" approaches (ethnography, action research, grounded theory). Finally, research tools and a general view on the research process are presented.

A.4.1.2. Psychology of Learning (C) (ECTS credits: 7, 5)

Main instructor: Fotini Bonoti

The course aims at examining and comparing traditional as well as recent theoretical approaches of learning. Behavioural, cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches are critically presented. Moreover, recent empirical data regarding the physiological basis of learning, self-regulated learning and metacognition as well as the role of motives and emotions are discussed. The associations between self and motivation, the role of learning goal orientations, and the impact of people's psychological needs on the process of learning are also examined through Self-Determination Theory.

¹ For an overview, see Appendix 1, Table 1

A.4.1.3. Contemporary Pedagogical Theories and Instructional Models (C) (ECTS credits: 7,5)

Main instructor: Domna Mika Kakana

In the context of this course the main pedagogical theories, contemporary research and practice concerning the education and care of preschool age children are presented. The aim of the course is to present and critically consider the epistemological trends of certain schools of pedagogy in the context of which didactic models have been developed. Traditional and contemporary pedagogical theories are analysed in comparison with the didactic models which have been developed as experimental pedagogical programmes for the education and care of preschool and school level children.

In this way, the course aims at the reinforcement of decision-making concerning the choice of appropriate programmes and the assessment of their effects through experience with children in different contexts. Emphasis is placed upon connecting educational research with practice and the formation of a personal pedagogical theory.

A.4.2. Second semester courses

A.4.2.1. Research Methodology II (C) (ECTS credits: 7,5)

Main instructor: Eleftheria Tseliou

The course aims at familiarising students with the design and conduct of research studies throughout every stage of the process, starting with the framing of the research question, the development of research design and research procedures, the analysis of data, the reaching of conclusions and the writing up of the research report. Building upon the “Research methodology I” course (1st semester), the present one focuses on issues such as: sampling, data collection and analysis (issues of process and method as well as certain tools and methods), conclusions and the writing up of the research report. In particular, significant emphasis is placed on the analysis of quantitative (descriptive and inferential statistics) as well as qualitative data (Grounded theory and Discourse / Conversation analytic methods).

The course includes lectures, as well as seminars, with the students participating in paper presentations and discussions as well as in data analysis exercises.

A.4.2.2. Modern Teaching Approaches (C) (ECTS credits: 7,5)

Main instructor: Vasilia Christidou

The course aims at identifying contemporary considerations on teaching different curriculum subjects, such as language, mathematics, history, science, etc. Traditional views on teaching and learning are presented and compared with recent research outcomes and theoretical positions. Different dimensions – cognitive, developmental, social, semiotic, etc- of teaching and learning are discussed. The students engage in evaluating and constructing lesson plans taking into account up-to-date teaching approaches and current curricula.

A.4.2.3. Design and Evaluation Theories for Educational Material and Pedagogical Toys (C) (ECTS credits: 7,5)
Main instructor: Maria Papadopoulou

The course aims at familiarising the students with the theories of designing and evaluating educational material and pedagogical toys. During the course, relevant educational data are discussed and various models, related to different fields of human sciences, are presented. These models concern the ways in which social interaction is organised and thus delimits the principles and the parameters of planning and evaluating educational material or pedagogical toys, such as illustrations, colours, pedagogical and didactic principles, ideology, typography etc. Moreover, issues concerning social and cultural exclusion and discrimination are emphasised. In order for the students to be able to evaluate educational material, evaluation models, comprising a variety of dimensions (pedagogical, sociological, linguistic) and relevant criteria, are also presented. The course is held in an e-learning setting, plus three meetings *in situ* for the initial design and interim evaluation of the students' work.

A.4.3. Third semester courses (compulsory elective courses)

A.4.3.1. Printed Pedagogical Material: Design and Evaluation (CE) (ECTS credits: 11, 5)
Main instructor: Tasoula Tsilimeni

The aim of the course is to make students capable of defining the pedagogical and teaching objectives of printed pedagogical material. Through this process the students are going to attempt to plan and produce various forms of printed pedagogical material, concerning almost all subject domains offered in the area of education.

At the same time, they are going to evaluate various forms of printed material, based on set criteria. Also, they are likely to suggest evaluation models of their own.

Some of the course objectives are that the students should be able to:

- Learn writing and illustration techniques of printed material
- Identify pedagogical aims of printed material
- Evaluate various printed materials
- Experiment with designing printed material

Students will be assessed on the basis of the submission and presentation of an essay, under the direct supervision of and co-operation with the course main instructor, based on certain requirements.

Due to the specific nature of the course, a series of lectures is scheduled, taught by distinguished invited scholars (Kanatsouli M., Giannikopoulou A., Gavrilidou S., etc), specialising, in various subject domains. Furthermore, the programme includes workshops conducted by experts like e.g., graphic artists (Parisi D., Psaraki V., Stefanidi F., et al.).

A.4.3.2. Printed Pedagogical Material: Interdisciplinary Approach & Instructional Use (CE) (ECTS credits: 11)
Course Leader: Tasoula Tsilimeni

The course encourages students to make suggestions for the use of printed

pedagogical material in the context of teaching. They are expected to propose projects of inter-disciplinary nature, focusing on subject domains like Language, Mathematics, Science, Environmental Education, Arts, etc.

Some of the course objectives are:

- Planning teaching proposals which make use of printed material of certain form
- Defining teaching aims of inter-disciplinary nature

Students will be assessed on the basis of the submission and presentation of an essay, which they will undertake in co-operation with the course main instructor, based on certain requirements.

The course is organised in lectures taught by members of the Department's academic staff, specialising in all subject domains related to teaching in education (Magouliotis A., Christidou V., Magos K., Strogilos V., Pantazis V. et al.).

A.4.3.3. Digital Pedagogical Material: Design & Evaluation (CE) (ECTS credits: 11,5)

Main instructor: Anna Chronaki

As far as this course is concerned, emphasis is placed primarily on introducing contemporary tools and theories that enable the design and evaluation of digital pedagogical materials. At the same time, the course focuses on current curricula reforms and actions (such as teachers' training, digital resources, textbooks) aiming to address the complexity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) use part of teaching and learning settings. Students get accustomed to basic categories of digital media, such as interactive microworlds, simulations, web 2.0 based environments, digital games or virtual reality applications. Moreover, students are asked to explore ways of connecting digital media with specific pedagogic and didactic practices taking into account contemporary theories of learning in the social multitude of classrooms. A basic requirement for students is to develop competences for choosing and applying a series of criteria towards designing learning environment(s) that connect digital media with haptic resources and embodied actions.

A.4.3.4. Digital Pedagogical Material: Interdisciplinarity & Design for Teaching (CE) (ECTS credits: 11)

Main instructor: Anna Chronaki

In this course, the focus is placed on discussing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to both the process of designing and producing digital pedagogical materials, and the process of designing technology-mediated teaching experiences. In any attempt at research processes related to designing digital pedagogic materials, as well as to using digital media teaching practices, it is necessary to consider issues of how theories from diverse scientific disciplines and literacies collaborate and interact. Within the context of this course unit, our postgraduate students are asked to discuss a number of texts and get sensitized to the importance of an interdisciplinary dimension where research into digital media design and use is concerned.

A.5. MASTER'S DISSERTATION (C) (ECTS credits: 30)

During the fourth semester of their studies, students must conduct an empirical research study under supervision by two members of the department's academic staff, on an individual basis. Topics can range within the programme's wider thematic areas, and the study can include the development of pedagogical material or toys (printed or digital), provided that it demonstrates elements of originality.

Following initial approval of the topic by the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly, students proceed with the conduct of the empirical part of their study and the writing up of their dissertation. Students are evaluated in the context of a presentation of their dissertation to a three-member committee consisting of their supervisors and an external examiner. The defence is open to the public and can take place provided that the students have previously acquired 90 ECTS credits.

A.6. SEMINARS

Coordinator: Irene Nakou

During their studies, the students attend two seminar cycles. The aim of these seminars is to thoroughly examine issues presented in the different courses, with emphasis given on the design of conventional and digital material. Furthermore, at the beginning of the Programme, and in cooperation with the University of Thessaly Library, a seminar is organised to familiarise students with library resources and their use.

The 1st seminar cycle (parts A and B) takes place during the winter semester, while the 2nd seminar cycle, during the spring semester (1st cycle, part A: 7,5 ECTS credits, 1st cycle, part B: 7,5 ECTS credits, 2nd cycle: 7,5 ECTS credits). The seminar instructors are members of the teaching staff of different Universities, researchers, artists and professionals with extensive work related to the seminars' content.

Each cycle consists of 8-10 seminars. Participation is obligatory, as active involvement is required on the part of the students.

A.7. FACILITIES

During their studies, students are provided with access to computer and Internet facilities at the department's multimedia laboratory. They also have access to the library of the Master's programme and to the University's main library.

At the beginning of the first semester of their studies, they are provided with all the necessary information regarding the use of the department's facilities and the ways for accessing the necessary material in support of their studies.

A. 8. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND FEES

Applicants should hold a first degree on subject domains related to those offered by the programme. They are admitted to the programme upon success in written entrance examinations. Initially, candidates take part in an English language written examination, in order to prove their ability to comprehend scientific texts written in English. Successful candidates then examined in a) Didactic Methodology, b) Research Methodology and c) Psychology.

All four exams are conducted by three-member committees, which differ in each exam. Each committee consists of members of the Department's academic staff, appointed by the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly.

Upon completion of the exams, successful candidates' applications are evaluated in order to accredit them with points, equivalent to their qualifications in accordance to the Postgraduate Studies Internal Regulation. The candidates' final grades and rankings are determined by adding the written examinations scores (70%) and the points awarded from the evaluation of their application (30%).

The programme's attendance requires the payment of fees (500E per semester). Grants are available each year for a limited number of students, depending on the available funds and cover fee expenses.

A.9. REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE AWARD

In order to be awarded the Master's degree, students must fully attend 8 programme courses (6 "compulsory" and 2 "compulsory elective" courses), 2 seminar cycles (one biannual and one that spans over two semesters), succeed in all examinations and successfully undertake and complete a Master's dissertation.

B. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE PhD STUDIES PROGRAMME

PhD studies run on the basis of the legislation in force (2083/92) and the Internal Regulation of the University of Thessaly. Applications in any of the department's subject domains are invited, provided that the research proposal entails original work. Successful completion of PhD studies is equivalent to 180 ECTS credits.

B.1. APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Following initial contact with a member of the department's academic staff who is willing to act as a supervisor, an application is submitted to the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly. The Assembly decides whether the applicant fulfils the criteria for undertaking PhD studies. It then assigns a three-member supervising committee, including the staff member who is willing to act as the principal supervisor. Subsequently, the three-member committee defines the thesis subject. Prior to acceptance of their candidature, applicants may be asked to attend up to three undergraduate or postgraduate courses run by the department, following suggestion by the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly.

Applicants should hold a first and a Master's degree by a Greek University or equivalent degrees by foreign Universities. In exceptional cases, the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly may accept applications from candidates who do not hold a Master's degree, according to the legislation in force (3685/08) and the Department's Internal Regulation of Postgraduate Studies. Greek applicants should have adequate command of the English language, whereas applicants from abroad should have adequate command of the Greek language, respectively. In certain cases, adequate command of a third language may be required.

B.2. DURATION OF STUDIES AND DEGREE AWARD

Following initial approval, the three-member supervising committee and the candidate submit the research thesis proposal. The minimum duration of studies for the completion of the degree is three years, whereas studies should not exceed a period of eight years, starting from the date of the appointment of the supervising committee.

Under exceptional circumstances, the candidate can apply to the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly for one year's study extension.

The supervising committee is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the candidate's work and submits a work progress report to the Department's Ad Hoc Committee Assembly, on an annual basis. The candidate defends his/her thesis in public and is assessed by a seven-member committee, which consists of the three-member supervising committee and of members of the academic staff of the department or other departments / universities. At least two of the committee members should be Professors, and at least two should be members of the department's academic staff. During the defence, the candidate presents his/her thesis and is interviewed by the committee members. Upon successful completion and majority agreement of the committee, the student is awarded the PhD degree.

APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Overview of courses of the Master's Programme

Semester	Course	ECTS
1	Research Methodology I	7,5
1	Psychology of Learning	7,5
1	Contemporary Pedagogical Theories and Instructional Models	7,5
1	1 st Seminar cycle: Facets of Pedagogical Material and Toys (A)	7,5
2	Research Methodology II	7,5
2	Modern Teaching Approaches	7,5
2	Design and Evaluation Theories for Educational Material and Pedagogical Toys	7,5
2	2 nd Seminar cycle: Research on Education	7,5
3	Printed Pedagogical Material: Design and Evaluation	11,5
3	Printed Pedagogical Material: Interdisciplinary Approach & Instructional Use	11
3	Digital Pedagogical Material: Design & Evaluation	11,5
3	Digital Pedagogical Material: Interdisciplinary Approach & Instructional Use	11
3	3 rd Seminar cycle: Facets of Pedagogical Material and Toys (B)	7,5
4	Master's Dissertation	30