

MIDWIFERY DEPARTMENT

POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME

"REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH – CHILDBIRTH – PARENTHOOD – BREASTFEEDING"

**Midwifery Department
School of Health Sciences
International Hellenic University (IHU)**

SPECIFIC REGULATION FOR THE APPLICATION OF E- LEARNING

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Detailed Justification for the Necessity of Using Distance Learning Methods in the Postgraduate Program “Reproductive Health – Childbirth – Parenting – Breastfeeding,” Along With the Proposed Teaching Methods and Equipment to Be Used

A. Justification for the Use of Distance Learning Methods

The Postgraduate Program (MSc) "Reproductive Health – Childbirth – Parenthood – Breastfeeding" has been designed according to current needs and demands in this specific field of study, with plans to commence in the spring semester of the 2025–26 academic year (February 2026).

The course content has been designed from the outset to be delivered through distance education methods, in accordance with the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 18137/Z1/16.02.2023 by the Ministers of Education, Religious Affairs, and State. The chosen method of instruction utilizes technological tools such as online platforms, educational video tutorials, and learning podcasts, which are expected to enhance and improve the learning outcomes of the program.

The use of distance learning methods has now become a new standard across all levels and forms of education. It is essential for emerging professionals to be trained in and adopt these principles. Part of the course content involves the use of new technologies by healthcare professionals for communication and counseling with mothers/individuals/couples. Thus, using these technologies during instruction will further familiarize students, deepen understanding, and improve their technological skills, enhancing the educational impact of the program.

The content and subjects of the MSc are not limited by but rather supported and enhanced through distance learning, aligning with the needs of postgraduate students. The program is primarily aimed at young professionals and healthcare workers—especially midwives—who often work rotating shifts in healthcare facilities. Distance education enables them to better organize and adapt to the learning process, supporting autonomous learning, which is a key aim of modern adult education.

Additionally, this MSc is the only program currently offering this specific combination of critical and innovative subjects essential for the professional development of midwives in Greece. This follows recent legislation establishing Birth Centers in Greece (Law 4999/2022, Joint Ministerial Decision 4109/B/15-7-2024). Therefore, the program is expected to attract applicants from across the country, and distance education will allow participation from those in more remote areas, ensuring equal access to continued education and, by extension, improved maternity care services.

From a technical perspective, students only need access to a computer to attend the program using synchronous distance education methods.

Efforts have been made in the course design to encourage active student participation and interactivity, using platforms such as Zoom, which supports chat rooms for

forming student groups to work collaboratively on projects and assignments, regardless of geographic location.

To meet the various needs of prospective students (e.g., shift-working healthcare professionals, residents of other regions), the MSc has adopted synchronous distance education (eLearning) using ICT tools (as per Article 88 of Law 4957/2022 and Ministerial Decision 18137/Z1/FEK 1079/23.2.2023). Asynchronous methods will also be used for supplementary materials to support autonomous learning, offering students deeper understanding during their personal study time.

This approach aligns with current trends in Greek society and with similar postgraduate programs, meeting the needs of adult (typically employed) students and leveraging opportunities from the new legal framework for higher education.

Lastly, distance education significantly reduces the program's operating costs and therefore the participation fees for students.

2. Digital Infrastructure Specifications of the IHU for Organizing Distance Learning Postgraduate Programs

The International Hellenic University (IHU) offers a fully developed Greek-language e-learning system that supports both synchronous and asynchronous education. Specifically, the Zoom-based system allows:

- Real-time feedback between instructors and students in different locations via teleconferencing and virtual classrooms.
 - Real-time visual and audio communication using appropriate hardware (computers, cameras, microphones, speakers, headphones, high-speed internet, and videoconferencing software).
 - Application and document sharing capabilities.
 - Use of electronic whiteboards.
- Access to discussion spaces (chat rooms) for student-teacher and peer-to-peer collaboration, opinion exchange, and joint assignments.

Additionally, IHU supports asynchronous education via the Moodle platform, offering:

- A Learning Management System (LMS)
- A Learning Content Management System (LCMS)
- An Authoring Tool for course creation

Educational materials—notes, presentations, exercises, activities with feedback, solutions, video lectures (in compliance with data protection laws), simulations, interactive content—are provided solely for student use and are protected by intellectual property laws (Law 2121/1993).

The e-learning environment (Zoom & Moodle) is in Greek and fully accessible to individuals with disabilities or special educational needs.

The Department of Midwifery already has adequate Zoom teaching licenses obtained during the pandemic. A multimedia room is also planned (budget allocated), equipped with modern audiovisual and web tools for hybrid/blended learning (voluntary in-person attendance).

The program also uses:

- The Center for Teaching and Learning Support (<https://ctl.ihu.gr/>)
- The Center for Lifelong Learning (<https://kedivim.ihu.gr/>)
- The Network Operations Center (IHU NOC)

These work with the Postgraduate Studies Committee to ensure high-quality support services and guidelines for online course development, following best practices.

One individual will be appointed as the e-learning system administrator, with the necessary expertise to assist faculty and students, as approved by the Department Assembly upon recommendation by the Postgraduate Committee. Their contact details will be shared with users at program launch.

3. Analysis of the Proposed Methods for Organizing the Educational Process

The MSc “Reproductive Health – Childbirth – Parenthood – Breastfeeding” is designed as an exclusively distance-learning program delivered entirely online via Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The primary teaching method is synchronous distance education. Asynchronous methods will also be employed through supplementary materials to promote deeper understanding and autonomous learning.

The program uses IHU’s established e-learning services:

- SSO access to all academic resources/applications
- Moodle and eClass platforms for synchronous/asynchronous learning
- Teleconferencing services (Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Jitsi, etc.)
- Streaming services
- Services for submitting questions, managing complaints, and academic advising

4. Documentation on the Digital Skills and Expertise of Teaching Staff

The teaching staff of the Department of Midwifery have extensive experience in distance education, gained both during undergraduate instruction amid the pandemic and through involvement in other distance-taught postgraduate programs.

It is important to highlight that the overwhelming majority of the academic staff in the Department of Midwifery possesses recent experience in distance teaching. This is

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primarily due to their participation in the KEDIVIM (Life- Long Learning) program "Methods for Promoting Natural Childbirth" (September–October 2023 and October–November 2024), which is delivered entirely online and has achieved notable success (the third cycle is already being scheduled for September- November 2025).

5. Digital Educational Material

The use of digital educational resources is a consistent educational strategy in the undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Midwifery through the Moodle platform. Consequently, the academic staff of the Department has both the knowledge and experience to design suitable digital materials for the Postgraduate Program.

The program aims to incorporate a wide range of digital learning resources, promoting rich interaction among students, instructors, and learning content. Various formats will be used, including video tutorials, learning podcasts, images, graphics, simulations, and more, to enhance student engagement and participation. These resources will be made available through the asynchronous learning platform, which will also host self-assessment quizzes and tests to foster critical thinking and learner autonomy.

In addition, digital handbooks (.pdf) will be accessible via the "Kallipos" platform, and students will have access to electronic scientific literature, both Greek and international, through the University Library services. To deepen understanding, instructors will use video lectures, analyze case studies, solve real-world problems in small groups, conduct virtual tours of health structures, and provide access to reliable external sources. Discussion forums will facilitate reflection, understanding, and collaborative learning.

Tools like Gibbs' Reflective Cycle will support students in bridging theory with clinical practice. The course content design aligns with inclusive education principles in higher education and contemporary trends in teaching. The learning environment is structured to ensure meaningful and successful learning for a diverse student population.

Student-Centered Approach

The postgraduate programme employs a student-centered philosophy, not only in teaching methods (e.g., Moodle use with instructional materials, videos, support documents, and guided instructions), but also in involving students in shaping the program content. Feedback is regularly gathered through discussions and course evaluations conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP).

Special attention is given to adapting materials to individual needs and ensuring continuous content and method updates in response to developments in Midwifery and reproductive health. The course content is presented uniformly to avoid inconsistencies and make platform navigation easier.

All materials are strictly for educational use and are protected by Greek copyright law (Law 2121/1993).

Flexible Learning and Equal Opportunities

Asynchronous learning methods offer flexibility, accommodating students' individual needs, particularly for working students. Equal learning opportunities are provided to all students regardless of location or employment status. The program is designed to meet these expectations, combining both synchronous and asynchronous methods to ensure competitiveness and accessibility.

Institutional Collaboration

The program is closely linked with KEDIMA, the Network Management Center, and ELKE of the International Hellenic University (IHU), incorporating best practices and technological expertise into its curriculum.

From the start of their studies, students gain access to course outlines detailing objectives, content, evaluation methods, educational materials, communication channels, and teleconferencing systems (Zoom). Academic calendars and course schedules are published and shared at the beginning of each semester.

Communication and Evaluation

Communication procedures with instructors and administrative staff are defined in the Study Regulations. Prompt email responses from faculty and administration are emphasized.

6. Digital Assessment and Data Protection

Student assessment is conducted as described in course syllabi using digital tools compliant with the Study Regulations. Methods are transparent from the semester's start, with ample time for questions.

ICT is integrated to support evaluations. Some courses are graded through assignments that may involve presentations or oral exams. For courses with final exams, these may be conducted online, using secure methods to ensure reliability and integrity. Measures such as user authentication and live proctoring are employed.

All processes adhere to the IHU's data protection policies, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – 2016/679), and Greek law (4624/2019). Data security protocols cover all online examinations and platform use (Zoom, Moodle), ensuring confidentiality and protection of personal data. Instructors, technical staff, and proctors are bound by confidentiality agreements.

7. Support for Students and Faculty

Support mechanisms include:

- Academic assistance via email and Moodle tools like forums and chats.
- Appointment of an Academic Advisor for each semester.
- Secretariat responses within five working days.

- Technical support (help desk) in cooperation with the Network Management Center of the Alexandria Campus in Sindos, including annually updated troubleshooting guides and a structured issue reporting system with an eight-day response deadline.
- Availability of the Student Ombudsman and a formal complaints process. Complaints submitted to the Secretariat are forwarded to the Program Director and then to the Program Committee for resolution.

This comprehensive support framework ensures the smooth operation and quality of the postgraduate program empowering both students and faculty in the digital learning environment.