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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Joint Graduate Programme (JGP) in Bioethics is administrated jointly by the **Department of Philosophy and Social Studies**, the **Department of Medicine**, the **Department of Biology** and the **Department of Sociology** of the University of Crete (U.C.), Greece. It is staffed by 20 faculty members from the above departments and 20 members from other Greek and European Universities and research institutions. It furnishes an optimal setting for the advanced study of current and emerging issues through a combination of pedagogical and research activities.

It has been in existence since the academic year 2003-2004. It is the only Graduate Programme in Bioethics in Greece and since its foundation it has acquired international reputation and established collaboration with leading academics in Europe and U.S.A. The JGP offers Master's and Doctoral degrees.

Programme Aims

The M.A. Programme aims to provide students with the appropriate theoretical frameworks, knowledge and skills, necessary for in-depth investigation, critical analysis, evaluation, and possible resolution, of ethical problems related to biomedical research, medical practice and health care policy as well as a critical understanding of the wider implications resulting from biomedical advancements for the lives of individuals, societies and their relation to the natural environment. The Ph.D. Programme aims to offer knowledge and expertise to take graduates on to a role in Higher Education, or employment requiring high-level skills in research or advanced subject knowledge.

Programme Description

(i) Master's Degree

Admission to the M.A. is based on undergraduate performance, a statement of purpose (no less than 1.000 words), English language proficiency, letters of reference, and an oral exam/ interview. Applicants with Undergraduate Degrees from Greek or accredited foreign Universities are eligible to apply.

Students must complete all requirements for the M.A. degree in four (minimum) to six (maximum) semesters.

The Programme has two main components:

- i) A core curriculum consisting of required and elective courses in philosophical Bioethics, clinical topics in Bioethics, sociological approaches to Bioethics, basic elements in modern Biology, issues in Law and Bioethics, Bioethics and the Environment.
- ii) A thesis project in Bioethics, carried out under the supervision of a member of the Programme faculty, assisted by two more members of faculty – all three of whom form the Examiners Committee for the M.A. thesis.

The core curriculum provides a solid foundation in the theoretical framework of Bioethics and develops related critical thinking skills. Students may create an area of emphasis through the selection of appropriate elective courses and the M.A. thesis topic. Each course is examined by one or two semester papers, to be submitted in the second half, or at the end, of the semester in which the course is taught. Only occasionally, a written exam at the end of the semester may be required.

M.A. students must achieve at least 120 credits (ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). Of the total required credits, 90 credits must consist of course credits and the remaining 30 are Master's thesis credits. Of the 90 course credits, 62 credits correspond to 11 required course units. The remaining course credits are made up of elective courses of the students' choosing with consideration of the individual student's area of emphasis (28 credits corresponding to 7 elective course units). In addition, graduates have to undertake and successfully complete, under supervision, a Master's thesis (20.000-25.000 words), which attracts 30 credit units.

Furthermore, graduates are required to attend workshops, research seminars and lectures conducted by internationally renowned scholars in the special sub-fields of Bioethics.

Opportunities for Career Development

The JGP provides advanced training to all those who wish to become prepared for teaching, research, policy development and clinical consultation work related to Bioethics.

Current M.A. Students

There are currently some 66 graduates working for the M.A. degree.

The following selection of M.A. thesis topics and titles indicate the range of studies recently undertaken by M.A. students:

- Kant's ethics and its relevance to Bioethics
- Kant's ethics, freedom of research in the biomedical sciences and its implications for Bioethics
- Autonomy and well-being in clinical Bioethics
- Humanity, dignity, objectification as regards new threats arising from the acquisition and application of new biomedical knowledge
- Moral justification, challenges to moral universalism in Bioethics
- Moral motivation, sources of normativity, moral reasoning in Bioethics.
- The evolution of ethics. Evolutionary challenges to Bioethics
- Medical futility
- Euthanasia, physician assisted suicide
- Drug development, clinical trials
- Clinical trials involving children
- Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis and eugenic intervention
- Human enhancement
- The ethics of research on human embryonic stem cells
- Elective multi-foetal reduction in assisted reproduction techniques
- Transplantation of tissues and organs. The problem, the alternatives, the moral challenges
- Bioethics and the media
- The ethics of animal experimentation

(ii) Ph.D. Degree

The Doctoral degree qualifies students for research and academic work in Bioethics. It includes original work which is presented in a thesis. Admission to the Ph.D. track depends on the successful completion of the M.A. in Bioethics, a written exam (applying to external candidates) and approval of a Ph.D. thesis proposal. At the Ph.D. level, students are advised by individual members of staff. They complete a thesis under the supervision of a three-member Advisory Committee, while a seven-member Committee conducts their final *viva voce*, in conformity with the standards laid down in the Greek law.

Students must complete all requirements for the doctoral degree in six (minimum) to twelve (maximum) semesters.

Current Ph.D. students

There are currently 7 research postgraduates working for the Ph.D.

The following Ph.D. topics and titles indicate the range of studies undertaken by postgraduate students:

- Privacy and trust in Bioethics
- The principle of autonomy and its relevance to Bioethics
- Privacy and data protection in electronic medical record use in primary health care
- The possibility of global distributive justice. Immigration and the right to health care
- Identity, roles, moral values and bioethical dilemmas of the life scientists involved in pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) research and application
- Ethical issues in decision making as regards the newborn's health care: An analysis of the views of medical professionals, pregnant women and mothers in Greece
- Autonomy vs. paternalism in medical care, with special emphasis on dental care

Special Features

Since 2007, the JGP has been publishing the peer-reviewed e-journal *Review of Bioethics* (<http://bioethicsreview.uoc.gr>).

Centre for Bioethics

The Centre for Bioethics was established in spring semester 2003-2004, in order to support research and teaching activities of the JGP. It pursues vigorous research in many aspects of Bioethics and supports all JGP activities. It has the following primary aims:

- To carry out research on issues in Bioethics and to promote the study of the ethical, social, legal problems arising out of medical and genetic research
- To stimulate the development of educational programmes in Bioethics and provide a resource centre for educational groups
- To conduct research projects and develop research initiatives.

It also supports the e-journal, *Review of Bioethics*.

It contains full computing facilities. Its initial equipment was funded by an E.U. grant (Framework 6) and the Greek Ministry of Education.