

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 24-44

BOARD DATE: April 30, 2024

**APPLICATION OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF GREECE TO AWARD THE
MASTER OF ARTS IN LEARNING DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the Articles of Amendment of **THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF GREECE** with the authority to award the Master of Arts in Learning Design and Technology. Provided further, that said degree-granting authority shall be retroactive to January 1, 2023.

ACTION: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 4/22/2024; and adopted by the BHE on 4/30/2024.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact: Cynthia Farr Brown, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner of Regulatory and Veterans Affairs

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

American University of Greece Master of Arts in Learning Design and Technology

BACKGROUND AND DEGREE AUTHORITY REQUESTED

The American University of Greece, a New England Commission of Higher Education (“NECHE”) accredited independent institution of higher education with its primary physical location in Athens, Greece, requested retroactive approval for the Master of Arts in Learning Design and Technology (“MALDT”). Due to a misunderstanding, the MALDT degree had been inadvertently offered by AUG without prior approval from the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (“Board”) since January 2023.

In October 2022, AUG received initial authorization from the Board to operate as a post-secondary institution and offer 30 undergraduate and 22 graduate degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. AUG serves as the academic program support organization for the American College of Greece (ACG), which offers a range of collegiate and pre-collegiate academic programs in Athens, Greece. The American College of Greece, with a campus in Athens, Greece was founded in 1875 in Smyrna, Asia Minor by Boston women missionaries of the United Church of Christ, ACG is an independent, not-for-profit, non-sectarian, co-educational academic institution. It is distinguished as the first comprehensive European college to be accredited by a U.S. regional accreditor, the New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE). Since its founding, the institution has sought to offer a transformative, American-style learning experience to its students.

AUG had been operating under the mistaken assumption that the authorization granted to the University by the Board in 2022 also provided AUG with the authority to offer the MALDT. See BHE Motion 23-14. Board staff had several conversations with AUG staff and representatives to clarify the parameters of the program approval process and the level of activity in the Commonwealth that would necessitate Board authorization of a degree program.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND AUTHORITY

The retroactive degree-granting approval process, as provided for in 610 CMR 2.06(6), is available on a limited basis when an institution has been offering degree programs and granting degrees without the prior approval of the Board of Higher Education under the mistaken belief that Board approval was either unnecessary or already obtained. The determination of whether a program meets this requirement is at the discretion of Board staff. The Board’s regulations permit an institution to petition the Board for retroactive degree-granting authority. When, after a review, the recommendation to the Board is positive, and the Board determines that the education received in prior years has been of sufficient quality, as measured against the minimum criteria in the BHE’s degree granting regulations, the Board may permit the institution

to award appropriate degrees to those students who have been enrolled in and who have successfully completed programs that are approved by the Board during the academic year(s) of the assessment. The retroactive approval process largely mirrors the review process outlined in 610 CMR 2.07(2), except that additional information is required to meet the regulatory requirement that the Board approve the institution's awarding of degrees in each year that the degree has been offered only if the Board determines that the education received in each year has been of sufficient quality.

AUG submitted the Retroactive Approval application in June 2023. The MALDT was reviewed by a Visiting Committee ("Committee") comprised of two members: Luke Hobson, Ed.D., Senior Instructional Designer and Program Manager at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Vanessa Dennen, Ph.D., Tyner Distinguished Professor of Education at Florida State University. The criteria that guided the review were 610 CMR 2.07(3) and 610 CMR 2.07(5).

The evaluation included the Committee's review of AUG's Retroactive Approval application and appendices, which contained information about each year that the MALTD degree was offered without the approval of the Board, specifically curricula and faculty, program student learning outcomes and evidence that those outcomes have been met. The Committee found that AUG had developed a solid foundation for their request to offer the MALTD degree, that all standards from 610 CMR 2.00 were substantially met, and that the education received in prior years had been of sufficient quality. The Committee recommended that the Board approve AUG's request to offer the MALTD degree, prospectively as well as retroactively, in accordance with 610 CMR 2.06(6).

Notice of the retroactive degree approval request was posted to the AUG website and the DHE website for the requisite 21 calendar day period beginning on March 6, 2024. The postings were made in accordance with the BHE policy on public notice and comment pursuant to M.G.L. c. 69 s. 30. No public comment was received.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

After a thorough evaluation of all documentation submitted, staff is satisfied that the American University of Greece has demonstrated that it should be granted authority to award the Master of Arts in Learning Design and Technology pursuant to the requirements set forth in 610 CMR 2.00. Furthermore, staff is satisfied that AUG has demonstrated that the offerings have been of "sufficient quality" such that authority should be granted retroactive to the date AUG began offering the degree (610 CMR 2.06(6)). Therefore, the recommendation is for approval of the Master of Arts in Learning Design and Technology, prospectively as well as retroactively to January 1, 2023.