

# Helping Students to Complete Their Studies: Effectiveness of The Umbrella Project in The International Hellenic University

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## Abstract

The recent financial crisis in Greece influenced various aspects and functionalities of our society, including Higher Education. As a result, a notable number of students in Alexander campus of International Hellenic University (IHU) delay, interrupt or even abandon their studies. Often these students have similar background characteristics (low-income families, special needs groups, different cultural origins etc.). To address this issue, a European project, “Umbrella”, was launched targeting at providing psychological support and counseling, especially to disadvantaged students, towards the completion of their studies. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the Umbrella project in terms of the increase in students earned ECTS. Data collected from 13 IHU departments for three different periods, since the onset of the project, namely March 2020 to October 2020 (Period A), October 2020 to March 2021 (Period B) and March 2021 to October 2021 (Period C). Friedman non-parametric test with Monte Carlo resampling technique was used to analyze the data. In case of statistically significant results the Bonferroni post hoc criterion was implemented. Findings showed that students ECTS for Period C ( $M=49.17$ ,  $SD=24.78$ ) were statistically increased compared to: Period A ( $M=16.92$ ,  $SD=16.92$ ) ( $p=0.042$ ) and Period B ( $M=12.17$ ,  $SD=9.06$ ) ( $p<.001$ ). It seems that the Umbrella project can effectively assist students who face difficulties towards smoothly progressing during their studies. Future studies could employ qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to better understand the mechanisms that motivated IHU students to engage in their studies.

**Keywords:** European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); European project; Greece; Higher Education; Vulnerable students

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