ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

Doc. 300.3.2
Date: 07-06-2021

Higher Education Institution's Response
(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Nicosia
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School/Faculty: School of Education**
- **Department: Department of Education**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme 1
In Greek:
Δημοτική Εκπαίδευση (4 έτη/240 ECTS, πτυχίο)
In English:
Primary Education (4 years/240, Bed)

Programme 2
In Greek:
Επιστήμες Αγωγής (3-4 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5-2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη/ 90-120 ECTS, Μάστερ)
- Εκπαιδευτική Ηγεσία και Διοίκηση (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Θεωρία, Πρακτική και Αξιολόγηση της Διδασκαλίας (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Ειδική/Εφαρμοσμένη Ειδική Εκπαίδευση (3/4 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5/2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90-120 ECTS)
- Εκπαιδευτική Τεχνολογία (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Διδακτική των Μαθηματικών και των Φυσικών Επιστημών (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Διδακτική της Γλώσσας και της Λογοτεχνίας (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Τέχνες και Εκπαίδευση (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Μουσική Παιδαγωγική (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)

In English:
Education Sciences (3-4 semesters, 1,5-2 academic years, 90-120 ECTS, Master)
- Educational Leadership and Administration (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Theory, Practice and Evaluation of Teaching (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

- Special/Applied Special Education (3/4 semesters, 1,5/2 academic years, 90-120 ECTS)
- Educational Technology (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Teaching of Mathematics and Sciences (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Teaching of Language and Literature (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Arts and Education (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Music Education (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)

Programme 3
In Greek:
Επιστήμες Αγωγής (3-4 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5-2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη/90-120 ECTS, Μάστερ εξ αποστάσεως)

- Εκπαιδευτική Ηγεσία και Διοίκηση (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Θεωρία, Πρακτική και Αξιολόγηση της Διδασκαλίας (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Ειδική/Εφαρμοσμένη Ειδική Εκπαίδευση (3/4 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5/2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90-120 ECTS)
- Εκπαιδευτική Τεχνολογία (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Διδακτική των Μαθηματικών και των Φυσικών Επιστημών (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Διδακτική της Γλώσσας και της Λογοτεχνίας (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Τέχνες και Εκπαίδευση (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
- Μουσική Παιδαγωγική (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS)
-

In English:
Education Sciences (3-4 semesters, 1,5-2 academic years, 90-120 ECTS, Master, E-learning)

- Educational Leadership and Administration (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Theory, Practice and Evaluation of Teaching (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Special/Applied Special Education (3/4 semesters, 1,5/2 academic years, 90-120 ECTS)
- Educational Technology (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)

- Teaching of Mathematics and Sciences (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Teaching of Language and Literature (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
- Arts and Education (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
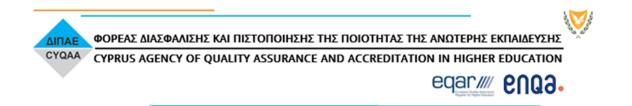- Music Education (3 semesters, 1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS)
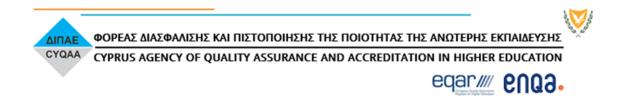
Programme 4
In Greek:
Διδακτορικό στις Επιστήμες Αγωγής (3 έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)
In English:
 PhD in Education Sciences (3 years, 180 ECTS, PhD)
- **Department's Status: Currently operating**

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

    - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*

    - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*

    - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Introduction and overall assessment

In reference to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the assessment-accreditation of Education Department of the University of Nicosia, please find our response below.

We would first like to thank the EEC members for their thorough and insightful work during the evaluation of the Department of Education. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation.

We are extremely pleased that the EEC report is positive, and that we were evaluated with very high scores. Moreover, the vast majority of the assessment criteria was marked as fully "Compliant".

The EEC has found that the Department has "all the hallmarks of a well functioning university community". It highlighted that the faculty's teaching approaches are high-level and that it is actively engaged in research. The EEC also commented positively on the integration of the Department's programmes.

In the following sections, we break down the comments and suggestions of the committee that were made specifically for the Department, and we then provide our response regarding the actions taken to address these comments.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

1.1 **Mission and strategic planning**
1.2 **Connecting with society**
1.3 **Development processes**

The Department of Education has been evaluated in 15 sub-categories and has been compliant in all but one. We thank the EEC committee for the constructive suggestions and we provide our response regarding the actions taken below.

Strengths and findings

"The EEC received well prepared material beforehand. During the site visits we had open discussions with a variety of representatives from different areas of the Department (students, alumni, faculty and staff). […] The personnel and students were very well prepared and the atmosphere was positive and constructive. […] We learned a lot about the operative workings of the Department. […] The SWOT analysis made by the Department was instructive. Our suggestions are in line with it. […] There are processes of quality assurance and curriculum development in place.[…] The EEC concludes that the programmes appear to be well integrated. […] In the DL programme we encountered creative and interesting innovations and practices. Over all, the support for students and faculty seem to be well planned and efficient. The community formed by the faculty was impressively vibrant and positive. Much can be achieved with such people. The EEC was also impressed by the students we encountered from the programmes. We would all be proud to have them at our universities".

Areas of improvement and recommendations

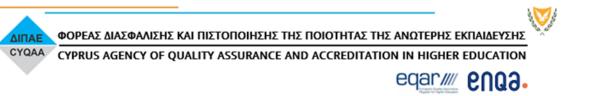#### 1.1. Mission and strategic planning

"The EEC did not, however, find any direct or clear mission statement. Neither it is not easily to be found e.g. through the departments web pages. Also: "short, medium-term and long-term goals and objectives" also received a full score in the self report. Such goals were not to be found in our material (using normal search commands etc.). The EEC has no reason to believe these points have not been thought of in the Department. Clearly and prominently stating them should enhance future strategic plans". […]

> **Response/Action**
> - Following the EEC's comment, we have revised the Department's vision, mission, core values and goals, as cited below. They can be also found on the Department's webpage
> https://www.unic.ac.cy/school-of-education/department-of-education/vision-and-mission/
>
> **Vision**
> The Department of Education, through core academic values, aspires to be a leading contributor to excellence in teaching, research and service to society.

Mission

Our mission is to create, disseminate and apply knowledge, strategies and practices, through research-based findings and contemporary programmes of study, while empowering students, practitioners, policy-makers and researchers to address the present and the future of education.

Core values

- Freedom of thought and expression
- Inclusion, equity and empathy
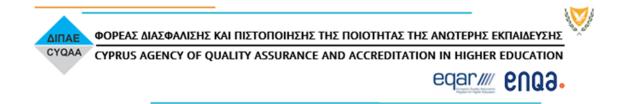- Honesty and integrity

Short-term goals

- To support excellence in teaching and learning via our research-led faculty.
- To continue generating and communicating interdisciplinary research-based knowledge, linked with 21st century skills and New Literacies.
- To engage in competitive research that addresses the needs and problems of theory and practice.
- To sustain and develop networks with leading universities and distinguished researchers.
- To develop post-graduate programmes in English, attracting more international students.
- To provide translational, inter-university opportunities for continuous professional development, through lifelong learning programmes.
- To sustain strong collaborations with policy-makers within the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, as well as with school leaders and practitioners, in order to constantly improve education.
- To increase the integration of PhD students into teaching and research positions
- To continue collaborating with the UNESCO Chair at the University of Nicosia, on "Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue for a Culture of Peace", organizing events, conferences and publishing books on the subject.

Medium-term goals:

- To enhance the quality of experience for undergraduate and postgraduate students to offer opportunities for tutoring their peers, but also mentoring vulnerable youth and marginalized groups outside of the University community.
- Widen the Department's social contribution, building on our digital and face-to-face learning provision.
- To establish a Lifelong Learning Centre.
- To create successful Research Centres within the Department to support the research of the faculty.

Long-term goals

- To become a worldwide leader in research.
- To enhance the quality of education in Cyprus and abroad through the use of research-based practices while concurrently focusing on 21st century skills.
- To establish a model kindergarten and primary school, at which the curriculum will be informed and designed according to new research findings.

1.2. Internships and teaching-research assistantships and financial aid for PhD students

1.3. Strategic choices of DL programmes

As brought up in the Department SWOT "Lack of financial aid to support PhD internships and teaching-research assistantships." With the freedom to create such positions and to allocate needed funds, the Department could do much to further the careers of young researchers, while also providing the faculty with help and assistance. Young doctors with experience in teaching and counseling have an obvious advantage in recruitment. This would make the programme more attractive and strengthen the research of the Department, in turn providing better opportunities for external funding. Definitely a Win-Win situation.
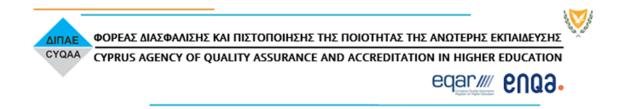
Response/Action

-The University offers scholarships (full or partial) for PhD students, when the student demonstrates exceptionality. It has already announced two full tuition scholarships in Education Sciences for candidates, who start their studies in Fall 2021. Requests for supporting students through Teaching or Research Assistantships are provided from the Office of the Vice-Rector for Faculty and Research. One of the Department's short-term goals is to increase the integration of PhD students in several research groups. Moreover, based on the student's profile, the Department will offer opportunities to them to mentor and give tutorials to undergraduate students. Also, our PhD students who work as educators in public schools will be asked to collaborate with the faculty and suggest initiatives in order to create links between the Department and the Education Sector. Finally, they will be trained to work as instructors for our new lifelong seminars. C.f. response 4.2.

*"The Department is also bound by regulations, some of which may severely limit the strategic choices available. E.g. the EEC found it problematic that a DL programme can
only be offered by a Department which also has a conventional programme with the same content. This may be a safeguard to start with, but after the Department and said DL programme have been evaluated, it makes little or no sense. Having parallel conventional and DL programmes may sometimes be called for, but may also be costly and inefficient. Such regulation tend to force a fundamentally unfair competition with publicly funded universities in Greece and Cyprus, as pointed out in the Department SWOT". [...]*

Response/Action

- This requirement applies for DL programmes offered to Greek students and it is a regulation of the Greek NARIC (DOATAP), for the recognition of the award titles of such graduates. The Greek NARIC's decisions are beyond our control. Since we are interested in having registered Greek students, we are obliged to follow this regulation. It is useful to mention, that this regulation does not apply for programmes that do not include Greek students.

1.4. Alumni society

"The development of an Alumni society is to be warmly recommended. Knowledge ages rapidly these days. To keep our alumni up to date is a lifelong task important for their careers and the reputation of the University". […]

Response/Action

- We absolutely agree with the Committee's comment. The Department of Student Affairs has regular communication with the University's alumni, regarding several events and news of the University. Moreover, graduates are also informed about career seminars and events from the Career Success Centre. At the departmental level, we also send out an electronic annual report/newsletter to our students and graduates. This newsletter is also uploaded on the Department's website https://www.unic.ac.cy/school-of-education/department-of-education/ Finally, we have recently created the Department's Facebook page, so that our students and alumni can keep in touch: https://www.facebook.com/educationDepUNIC/?ref=py_c It already has 936 followers. Our alumni are automatically provided with a 10% scholarship to pursue further studies with us.

1.5. Compatibility among programmes and Departments in the School

Additionally, provide information on the following:
a. Coherence and compatibility among programmes of study offered by the Department.
b. Coherence and compatibility among Departments within the School/Faculty (to which the Department under evaluation belongs). […]

Response/Action

- ***a.*** *"Coherence and compatibility among programmes of study offered by the Department".*
The Department of Education has two undergraduate programmes in Primary and Pre-primary Education. Both programmes share a common pedagogical and theoretical core, although they also offer specialized theoretical and didactic courses and practicum to students. Our MEd postgraduate courses focus and elaborate on different areas of the pre-primary and primary education curriculum. The PhD programme evolves from the specializations of the MEd programme, with a strong focus on the creation of new knowledge, through solid research practices.

b. *"Coherence and compatibility among Departments within the School/Faculty (to which the Department under evaluation belongs)".*

The Department of Education and the Department of Music and Dance have undergraduate programmes that prepare educators to become teachers, and that is the reason they form the School of Education. For example, there is a Music Education Programme in the Department of Music and Dance.
 Over the years, there have been several interdisciplinary collaborations with the Department of Music and Dance in order to make the coherence and compatibility of curriculum across disciplines visible to students. For example, students attending the courses EDUP-160-Music Education in

Kindergarten, EDUP397-School Experience II and EDUP497-School Experience III collaborated with students from the Music Department attending the course MUED-315: Music in the Early years. During this collaboration a multimodal performance (storytelling accompanied by music improvisation) was created and presented to young children. Another notable collaboration was a co-teaching class session of a curriculum topic utilizing creative body movement. Department of Education students, attending the EDUS-311: Cognitive Psychology course, and students from the Dance programme attending the course DANC-466: Teaching Methodologies in Dance, engaged in problem solving and learned how to represent the concept of water through creative movement. The problem was inspired by a contemporary art painting of a Cypriot artist located at a local gallery.

1.6. Internationalization of the postgraduate programmes

"The programmes of the Department have a relatively large percentage of international students. Most of these are from Greece. The masters and doctoral programmes in English provide opportunities for widening the recruitment base. Is there a will to do so?"

Response/Action

-Yes, there is a strong will and a great need to develop postgraduate programmes in English. Indeed we are currently making efforts in relation to this direction, concerning a new English-speaking programme that has been developed and soon will be submitted to CYQAA for evaluation/accreditation. Moreover, it is useful to mention that our Department in collaboration with Newcastle University in the U.K., has received a grant from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) to offer a summer school in English. The title of the summer school is "Sharing Good Practice in Multilingual and Intercultural Virtual Learning Spaces". The summer school will be held between June 28 and July 2021, and it will be promoted to all students attending postgraduate programmes at both institutions.

1.7. Departmental budget

"The majority of the basic funding is controlled outside the Department. More budget autonomy on the Faculty and/or Department level is needed for more goal oriented and flexible action. Since rapid and serious changes are evident in the context of the faculty and department, they need to be able to responsibly use their expertise to further the goals of the university".

Response/Action

- The process for developing and approving the budget starts from the Department. It is the Department's responsibility to identify and request new faculty and Capital Expenditure (CapEx) needs. As regards new faculty needs and appointments, the Department, after identifying the particular needs, presents them to the School Council for approval. The needs are being reviewed by the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee and are presented to the Senate, which then requests the Council's ratification. In relation to Capital Expenditure needs, after the Department finalizes the needs, the Head of

Department, submits the CapEx needs to the Dean of the School, for his/her approval. The Dean in consultation with the Head prepares the final CapEx School budget.

The approved School CapEx budget, which includes the CapEx budgets of all Departments in the School, is then submitted to the Rector and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, who meet with the Heads of Departments and the Deans to finetune each departmental budget. The University CapEx budget of the Schools is then submitted to the University Council for final approval. On a whole, the budget is prepared in a transparent way on an annual basis, using a bottom-up approach, and it is ultimately discussed and approved by the Council. However, if new needs emerge at any time of the fiscal year, the Head of the Department is eligible to fill in an authorisation form. Recently, the Department has requested a new budget, in order to start goal-centred actions, which has been approved by the Council. Finally, during the COVID-19 pandemic academic years, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, all extra CapEx requests by the Department have been approved by the Council.

1.8. Recruitment, funding of the faculty and Department, transparency

"The recruitment of faculty is firmly on the university level. Same with the localities. With the huge changes brought on by distance work and learning, the department is exceptionally well situated to use less office and teaching space and in need for suitable facilities for such activity as pointed out in the SWOT". […] There seem to be clear limits to what can be done in recruitment at the Department level. This is similar to many universities. Centralized governance is quite often rather a part of the problem than the solution. In 1.3.4 there are two different questions: 1) adequate and transparent funding processes for the operation of the Department. The EEC is not convinced of this. We asked e.g. how the funding of the Faculty and Department would change with the stated mission of growth. The answer was that there would not be a change. Either there is a problem with the funding system or the transparency at the University level".
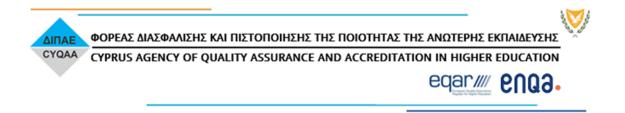
Response/Action

- With regards new faculty needs and appointments, the Department, after identifying the particular needs, present them to the School Council for approval. The needs are reviewed by the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee, and they are then presented to the Senate. The Senate's proposal is submitted to the University Council for ratification, in line with Article 25(1) of The Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law, 2005.

Concerning the financial transparency in the University, it should be noted that, by the end of the fiscal year, the financial dashboards of each School and Department are presented to the faculty members. This helps the Department to think strategically of the short- medium and long-term management and the budget that will be prepared for the next academic year.

1.9. Senate's role concerning Faculty and Departmental matters

"The university senate takes decisions on a number of issues across all Facultes. Goals, demands, quality and expertise naturally vary between disciplines. So, fiscal responsibility and decisions concerning personnel,
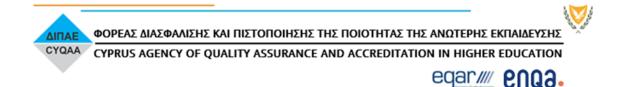
premises, curricula and doctoral dissertations need to be taken closer to the fields of expertise, e.g. at the Faculty and Department level. Programmes in English have the potential greatly to enhance visibility and reputation of the Department, and naturally also broaden the opportunity for recruitment of international faculty".

Response/Action

-The Senate is the supreme academic authority of the University of Nicosia. It consists of the Rector and Vice Rectors, the Deans of Schools, three faculty representatives of each School and one student representative of each School. In this way, all Schools and Departments are represented in the Senate and are part of the decisions made. Clearly, decisions pertaining specifically to the Department (such as recruitment, curricula, doctoral programmes) are initially taken at a Department and School level, in line with the University's regulations. These decisions are ratified by the Senate as per the Article 26(1) of the The Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law, 2005. The Senate's, School's and Department's responsibilities are clearly defined in The Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law 2005, which needs to be adhered to. The University Council is the ultimate authority, ratifying Senate's decisions relating to issues with financial implications. Both the Senate and the Council thoroughly support the Department of Education to start offering postgraduate programmes in English.

Consequently, the University operates by fully complying with the aforementioned Laws, which clearly define the responsibilities of the Department, School, Senate and Council and provides the framework for its operation.

In regard to doctoral dissertations, however, each Department is the one that determines the calls for doctoral research topics, which are purely based on faculty's expertise and availability.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy
2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. The Department of Education has been evaluated in 31 sub-categories and has been compliant in all but one. The average of this category was 4.5/5. We thank the EEC committee for the positive evaluation and the constructive suggestions; we provide our response regarding the actions taken below.

Strengths and findings

 "The need for modern, flexible, and appropriate infrastructure and localities as well as support for instruction (especially DL) and research is obvious, especially if the University intends to increase the number of international students and to have a large percentage of its students graduate. […] The student feedback for the courses and the teachers was impressively comprehensive and the results positive. It is clearly a valuable asset in developing curricula and the Department more generally". […] Mechanisms to support writing exist at a good level".
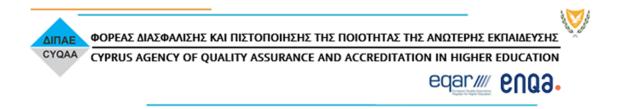
Areas of improvement and recommendations

2.1. Plagiarism

 "There needs to be funding for doctoral students attending conferences. Once a year would be good. Concerns were raised about plagiarism. The Med and Ded students raised concerns about a policy of 30% accepted plagiarism. The EEC understands that an absolute zero is not realistic with the apps now in use, and that this concern might even be a legend. But if this actually is the policy, then this is unacceptable. Technical numbers aside, intellectual property rights in universities rely on a no plagiarism policy.

Response/Action

-The EEC committee has highlighted the concerns of postgraduate students about plagiarism. In regard to plagiarism checks for our doctoral programme, we would first like to state that we have zero tolerance for plagiarism. To start with, issues of plagiarism are covered in our Research Methods courses, as well as in the Doctoral Seminar. Moreover, we always qualitatively evaluate all assignments for plagiarism and submit them through Turnitin. In addition, a university-wide procedure has already been put in place so that all research proposals and final dissertations are checked for plagiarism, and that the relevant report is submitted to all committee members before each evaluation takes place. However, when plagiarism cases are identified (none have been found at the doctoral level so far), the faculty member must arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the infraction. Based on the result of this joint conversation and depending on the gravity of the offence, the faculty can decide on one of two ways to proceed: a) To impose a penalty of up to 100% of mark deduction for the specific assessment; or, b)To refer the disciplinary offence to the Department Council. If the Department Council perceives that a case referred to it constitutes a more

serious offence, the case is forwarded to the Student Disciplinary Committee, which is appointed by the Senate to further discuss and resolve the issue. Additionally, we emphasize issues of plagiarism in all Research Methods courses throughout all programmes, as well as in the course EDUS-099 (Academic Literacy and Skills). EDUS-099 is an introductory course to academic life and skill, designed for first year undergraduate students. As part of the course, we discuss issues of plagiarism and academic writing.
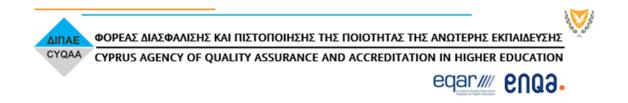
2.2. Lack conference funding and labs

"Insufficient modern facilities and infra for DL were noted in the Department SWOT. The lack of laboratories was brought up. In 2.2.18 at least two very different things are again asked ((CYQAA!)): […] Conference funding for doctoral candidates does not exist at the moment - but it is planned. Some concerns about the technological infrastructure were also raised in the SWOT". […]

Response/Action

The EEC has further raised the funding needs for doctoral students to attend conferences. We are currently urging students to present their work in at least one research conference before their graduation. Funding for student attendance at such conferences is obtained from the Office of the Vice-Rector for Faculty and Research. No applications to cover conference funding for doctoral students have ever been rejected so far.

It should also be noted that a postgraduate student lounge/lab does exist in the Millennium Building of the Main Campus (M-202). This, however, was created after the students who participated in the departmental evaluation had graduated. Moreover, in 2020, the Pedagogical Lab of the Department, which is located in room M-201 of the Main Campus, was fully renovated.

3. Administration

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in this section. Out of 10 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 5 of them with the highest grade of (5), and in the remaining 5 with the second highest grade (4). The average of this category was 4.5/5. We thank the EEC committee for the positive evaluation and the constructive suggestions; we provide our response regarding the actions taken below.

Strengths and findings

"No problems with procedures, transparency or minutes were brought up. The students were quite unfamiliar with their role in decision making, but that is probably not unusual. The students interviewed typically had been successful in their studies". […]
"The Department has all the hallmarks of a well functioning university community. The faculty is active and they clearly work well together. The atmosphere was tangibly positive and constructive".

Areas of improvement and recommendations

3.1. Internationalizations of postgraduate programmes

There is much that is positive. Having such a strong influence on how things are run and regulated from the model that is in use in publicly funded universities and especially from Greece may be unrealistic. There are many opportunities globally, but demanding that the private universities replicate traditional public universities when DL and instruction in English will probably hinder development".

Response/Action

We thank the EEC committee for the concerns raised about the internationalization of our postgraduate programmes. As mentioned above, a new English-speaking programme has already been developed and soon will be submitted to CYQAA. We are currently making various other efforts towards this direction, and these will be announced in due time. Moreover, following your recommendation, we will consider offering our doctoral programme in the English language as well.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study
4.2 Organisation of teaching

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in this section. Out of 13 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 11 of them with the highest grade of (5), and in the remaining 2 with the second highest grade (4). The average of this category was 4.9/5. We thank the EEC committee for the highly positive scoring and the constructive suggestions; we provide our response regarding the actions taken below.

Strengths

"The instruction at the Department is at a good international level. We encountered inspired and active students and teachers. From what we heard and saw, many instructional arrangements were innovative and impressive".
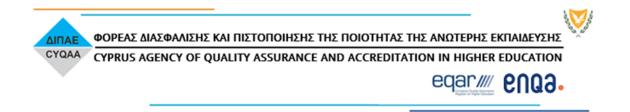
Areas of improvement and recommendations

4.1. Conventional Bed and Med Programmes

"The need for conventional Bed and Med programmes at the Department should be questioned. With the a clear majority of the students taking only a selection of the courses, with relatively low rates of students taking the degree of the programmes, and with such success in DL, there are other than traditional approaches that need to be considered. If regulations hinder, they may be changed. The same goes for administrative practices.

Response/Action

The University of Nicosia has been a conventional Higher Institution, since its establishment. The University, however, also offers Distance Learning programmes wherever it is applicable and feasible in relation to the curriculum's methodology and need for such a programme. The University of Nicosia has an extensive campus of 20 buildings, a big number of amphitheatres, several labs, including the pedagogical one, which is specially designed and well equipped for both Bachelor programmes in Primary and Pre-primary Education. Although, we offer both conventional and online programmes, we firmly believe in the culture of the conventional University. The Department of Education has been offering conventional programmes in primary and pre-primary education for several years and aspires to continue offering them, because they significantly contribute to the Cypriot and Greek society and also to the academic culture of the University. Every year, we accept a significant number of undergraduate students that allow us to work in small groups and achieve maximum results. Furthermore, we would like to note that the undergraduate students we attract have a different profile from those at the public university, satisfying thus different needs of the society. A lot of our students are either studying for a second degree or working and studying in parallel. These mature students prefer our program, because of the flexibility in teaching hours (i.e., multiple afternoon classes) and the student-centred support of

the programme. Moreover, the BEd programme cannot be offered online, because of the face-to-face requirements of the practicum and of the other practical courses of the programme. Finally, we need to highlight again the requirement by the Greek NARIC (DOATAP), for the recognition of DL award titles, with regards to the offering of the equivalent conventional programme.

4.2. PhD students as teaching assistants or/and junior researchers

The doctoral students could be more integrated into the faculty by positions as junior researchers or assistants. This would help the teaching staff, provide teaching experience, and strengthen the first steps of the research career.
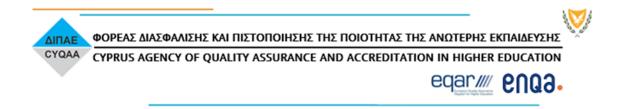
Response/Action

-We strongly agree that doctoral students could and should be more integrated into the faculty in positions as junior researchers or teaching assistants. We have already given our PhD students some opportunities to act as guest lecturers to some courses and in tutorials, so they gain experience. We provide herein the current regulations for Student Teaching Assistantship (see Appendix), that clarify the type and length of the teaching assignment, the responsibilities expected of the assignment, the training requirements, the supervision and evaluation procedures and, the non-employment/non-contractual status of the assignment. Our Department has already assigned PhD students as instructors to the new online translational and inter-university lifelong programme, starting in September 2021 between our Department and a public university in Greece. Efforts are also being made to increase the involvement of doctoral students in research projects, where possible. Cf. response 1.2

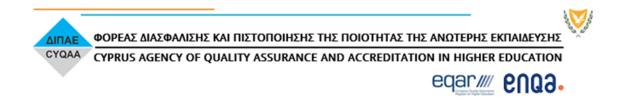## 4.3. Master Thesis in the Med Programmes

One practice that some in the EEC found less than optimal is for most of the students in the Med programme to be allowed not to do a Master's Thesis. The reason given, that most students want it so, is familiar but unconvincing. Teachers typically want practical skills and knowledge. This is the same in many countries. However, it makes continuing studies on the doctoral level so much harder. One could also argue, that the most useful skill for teachers and professionals more generally in changing times is to learn to gather research based information, to test it, and to be critical about it, and to find new policies, methods etc based on sound research. Without these skills, our masters are left with knowledge, practices and skills that these days get old faster and faster. Not having the students learn to do research may be a serious hindrance to them later in life. It also weakens and hinders the research based development of their future work places and society. Letting the students have their way may in this case be popular and tactically astute, but also strategically unwise".

Response/Action

-It is indeed important to be research literate and we support the involvement of our MEd students in various research activities of different types. Currently, we offer 3 research methods elective courses in MEd programmes (EDUC 510, EDUC 511, & EDUC 512). Moreover, in two of these courses students are required to complete a small-scale research study (including data collection, analysis, and a write-up). In addition, most of the specialization courses of the MEd programmes require long research essays, in relation to the particular topic of each class. It is useful to mention that most of

our students are practitioners and a more research/academic oriented path in their studies is not their main priority. For this reason, the MEd programmes offer to the candidates the choice to carry out a thesis or attend three specialized courses, instead. This is in line with both the University policy for Master Degree programmes which provides for optional Thesis, and the the practice followed by other universities in Cyprus. We strongly encourage students who are interested in continuing a PhD programme to opt for the Master thesis. Our postgraduate students are all mature learners, and most of them have a long experience in education. For this reason, we consider it significant to offer them the opportunity to complete their studies with or without a thesis, according to their learning and working needs, and after interacting with faculty members about this matter.

5. Teaching Staff

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in this section. Out of 8 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 7 of them with the highest grade of (5), and in the remaining 1 with the second highest grade (4). The average of this category was 4.9/5. We thank the EEC committee for the highly positive scoring and the constructive suggestions; we provide our response regarding the actions taken below.

Strengths

"The Department has a faculty and staff commensurate with its tasks. It is also relatively small and intimate, which has advantages. As the funding is largely dependent of student tuition fees, much may change with DL. This would also create need for change in the work load and structure of the personnel.
The qualifications of the teaching staff and their competence in their subject is convincing".

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.1. Increase incoming academics

"Increasing the presence of incoming academics could enhance the international cooperation and discourse at the Department".

Response/Action

We note the EEC's remark. Most of our faculty have international collaborations with colleagues from all over the world. They are involved in international research projects and publish joint articles. They organize international conferences with distinguished scholars as speakers. Our Charter and regulations provide for visiting academics and we will be working on this recommendation.

6. Research

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 9 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 4 of them with the highest grade of (5), in 4 of them with the second highest grade (4) and in the remaining 1 as partially compliant (3). The average of this category was 4.3/5.

Findings and Strengths

"As stated in the Department report, the Department has a research policy formulated in line with its mission and institutional capabilities. The limitations in the funding have been discussed previously. Given the circumstances, the faculty does perform well in research. There is definitely a potential for improvement, if the workload and resources can be optimised". […] "The researchers at the Department are active in publishing, conferences, editorial boards, and international exchange. International research cooperation can be found on many levels. Also external research funding, though the flow could be more substantial".

Areas of improvement and recommendations

6.1. Open access publishing

"The EEC found little evidence for Open access publishing, which would increase international visibility and reputation.
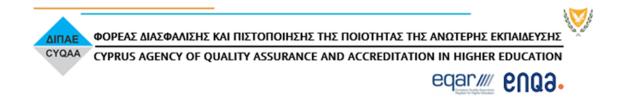
Response/Action

-Although in the past, it wasn't common practice to publish in open access journals, this practice has changed a lot in the last few years, as you can verify from our publication record. This includes both open access books and journal publications. Moreover, the University has agreed to support our faculty members and doctoral students, in covering the publication fees of open access journals as part of the University's research strategy.

6.2. Article based doctoral dissertations

We would strongly recommend that the policy of not accepting article based doctoral dissertations be discontinued. Monographs should still be an accepted option, but doctors need to be trained to communicate research findings through articles to prepare them for the demands of modern research. This has the added benefit of making the doctoral students part of the living research community of their field.
It may also be good idea to consider the possibility of professional doctorates in addition or instead of PhDs".

Response/Action

-We thank the EEC for the recommendation of accepting article-based doctoral dissertations. Under the University's PhD Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes, a monograph is a requirement for a doctoral dissertation. So, currently a PhD by publication is not an option within the University's PhD code of practice. However, as a Department we are moving towards helping students build their research profile by trying to publish at least one research article before their dissertation. Once this process is streamlined, we might consider this at a university level.

7. Resources

The Department of Education has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section.

Findings and strengths

"Long term strategic planning would definitely be healthy for the development of the Department. This includes extended budgetary autonomy providing, as well as controlling strategic resources and recruitment. The Department and Faculty have obvious potential in a challenging situation, but they are held back by their lack of autonomy.
There is a general agreement on that the conditions are less than optimal. At the same time, people cooperate well and are quite happy and productive. Changing unnecessary regulations, allocating funding and resources according to strategic goals and results, and giving strategic and fiscal power – but also responsibility - to the Faculty and Department level, would give the Department the possibility of attaining its full potential. They do, after all, possess the best expertise in their field. If they can not find the way to a better tomorrow, who can"? […] "The Department seems to be making good use of the little money they are budgeted".

Areas of improvement and recommendations

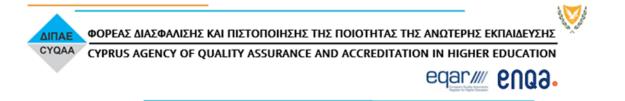### 7.1. Financial transparency and budget limitations

"The limitations of the Department funding and budget are obvious and have been discussed previously. It is not clear and transparent how the Department could receive more resources from the University – even if they would dramatically change their sources of income. This does not provide incentive and encouragement for bold strategic improvement.

Response/Action

We have already addressed the annual budget process in a previous answer and explained the bottom-up approach adopted (See 1.7 and 1.8 responses). In addition to the established process, any additional needs that arise during the year can be requested. It is important to mention that the Council and the Rectorate fully support the internationalization and the mission of the Department in general. Recently an extra budget towards this direction has been approved.
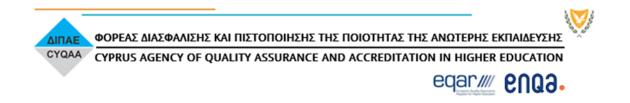
7.2. Attrition of personnel

"The salaries and resources of the Department are reported to lag behind the public University of Cyprus. This may lead to unwished attrition of personnel and be a serious hindrance in recruitment. You do not necessarily get quality for money, but that does not prove the opposite".

Response/Action

-The spirit of collegiality, solidarity and commitment that characterizes the Department of Education is very much valued and has been acknowledged by the Committee. All colleagues are happy to contribute to creative teaching, high-quality research, novelty and contribution to society. However, some colleagues prefer, for several reasons, to seek new opportunities of employment, something that happens in all kinds of employment. The University has in place a research recognition award up to €1000 per publication in Scopus-indexed journals and up to €1,965 annually for participating in conferences. Moreover, faculty members, who are engaged in research receive additional remuneration, which in many cases, is quite substantial, based on the budget available for the project and the work carried out. Additionally, they are entitled to a sabbatical leave. The Senate and the Council are positive with regards to the provision of a fully paid sabbatical leave for faculty members, in replacement of the current sabbatical, which covers 75% of the faculty member's salary. The proposal for a fully paid sabbatical leave has been recently approved by the Senate, reviewed by the Council, and it is expected to be finalized by June 2021. Having said that, we consider it important to avoid more unwanted attrition of personnel. This can be attained by rewarding more extra efforts of the faculty being active in organizing conferences, as well as other academic and open to public events, participating in the development of new programmes of study and generally having major roles in new initiatives.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

"The EEC is thankful for the trust placed in us. The opportunities to observe and talk with the students, faculty, and staff of the Department have been frank and eye-opening. We have learned a lot.

The present situation of the Department is not unproblematic. Finding a way to attract good students to the programmes, as well as a way to keep them in the programmes till graduation are of the essence. There is also much that is definitely promising. DL as well as Med and Ded programmes in English provide abundant opportunities. The balance between risks and possibilities is not an easy one, and the EEC fully understands that none of us has had the same circumstances.

On the other hand the international English Master's and doctoral programmes provide ample opportunities for expansion, further development of the personnel (larger, more varied and more international) and would enhance the visibility and reputation of the Department, the programmes and the University. This would in turn help the University reach its strategic goals.

Instruction and research of tomorrow will need investments in infrastructure and personnel. The Department is also well placed to provide inspiration for other Faculties at the University and more globally to find new and efficient methods and technology for instruction.

One important way modern universities have of enabling progress in research, instruction, and societal impact is to provide those who have the expertise and responsibility for their field with responsibility and autonomy over fiscal matter, recruitment and localities. Presently the Department can only dispose of a relatively small sum for operative costs. This needs to change.

Much is changing in instruction and research. With flexibility in how resources are allocated, many innovative solutions are found daily in the Universities around the world. As long as the resources are used efficiently and in an accountable way, to reach the strategic goals of the University and country, the raison d'être of the University is fulfilled. The University senate and ministry do well in keeping their work focused on the strategic level".
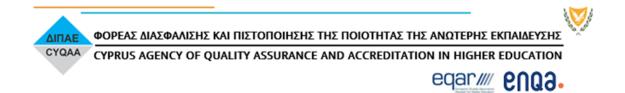
Final Response

The Department has been found compliant in 90 sub-categories out of 93. The average score was 4.4/5.

We wish to thank the EEC for this positive and constructive evaluation and feedback, which is rich in suggestions for further improvement and growth. The professionalism of the EEC during the execution of its duties was exemplary and much appreciated. The detailed discussion of all issues, pertinent to the Department under evaluation, led to a fruitful discussion between the members of the EEC, the official representatives of the University and faculty members of the programme. The discussion proved to be extremely helpful due to the expertise of the EEC members and their willingness to share their recommendations for further expansion of the Department. The demanding set of questions allowed us to elaborate on the mission and goals of the Department and the way these can be fulfilled.

We have carefully reviewed the EEC report, and fully acknowledge that the Department is a living entity, always amenable to further progress and development, and indeed we have been constantly working towards this direction. Accordingly, the suggestions for further improvement offered by the EEC are taken very seriously. We have considered these suggestions and have provided herein the actions taken, in order to incorporate them in our programme.

Again, we would like to thank the committee for the positive evaluation of our Department and the suggestions/recommendations that have been made.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof Elena Papanastasiou	Dean of School of Education	█████████
Dr Marina Rodosthenous	Chair of the Department	█████████
Dr. Christiana Karousiou	Assistant professor Quality Assurance Committee Representative	█████████
FullName	Position	

Date: 08-06-2021

Appendix

Student Teaching Assistantships

The university is committed to an equitable, supportive, and professional environment for doctoral education. Assistantships help students develop academic rigor and creativity, independent judgment, intellectual honesty, and the ability to communicate their knowledge.

This policy is designed to promote effective communication of expectations between doctoral students on assistantships, the faculty members involved and the University.

In order to qualify for a Student Teaching Assistantship (STA), students registered on a PhD programme should satisfy the following criteria:

1. Must be in good academic standing
2. Must have demonstrated oral and written proficiency in the language of instruction
3. Must have demonstrated competency in the subject to be taught

STAs should be given very clear instructions about their teaching responsibilities and any training requirements. Responsibilities may include the following or a combination of the following activities:

- Assist with preparing and administering course material, assignments, and examinations
- Assist with grading course assignments and examinations
- Prepare and conduct tutorials
- Lead discussions and/or laboratory sections
- Assist in teaching a section of a course
- Coordinate work of students when needed

The assignment will be made in consultation with the individual student, and upon the recommendation of the faculty member and the relevant Head of the Department to the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research. The relevant form (DSO/STA) must be completed and submitted for approval no less than two months in advance of the academic semester.

Upon assignment, the relevant Head of Department in consultation with the faculty member involved, must provide STAs with appointment letters indicating:

- the type and length of the teaching assignment
- the responsibilities expected of the assignment
- the training requirements
- the supervision and evaluation procedures
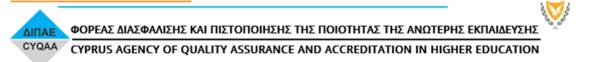- the non-employment/non-contractual status of the assignment

The faculty member is responsible at the end of every semester to provide a letter of formative evaluation to the assigned STA. In cases where the STA's performance is judged unsatisfactory, the assistantship may

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

be terminated upon the recommendation by the faculty member and the relevant Head of the Department to the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research.

The STA Policy is offered to the doctoral students as an opportunity for practicum experience and it is not considered as an employment by the university. Even though there are no financial remuneration associated with STAs, a scholarship, on the STA's doctoral fees will be granted in return for their services. Students who are eligible for more than one type of Financial Aid will be awarded the scholarship or grant with the highest percentage or amount.
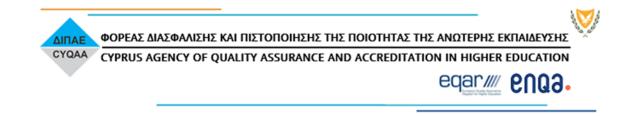
The policy may vary across schools.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

DSO/ STA (Student Teaching Assistantship)

Student Details	Student ID Number	
	First Name	
	Surname	

Registration Details	Programme of Study	
	Department	
	School	

Teaching Assistantship Details	Academic Semester/s	
	Course Code	
	Course Title	
	Name of faculty member teaching the course	

Academic Approval	Faculty Member	Name: Signature:	Date:
	Head of Department	Name: Signature:	Date:
	Vice Rector for Faculty & Research	Name: Signature:	Date:

GUIDANCE NOTES

1. The Faculty Member is responsible to oversee the completion of this form and ensure that is in line with the Student Teaching Assistance policy found in the Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes.
2. The Vice Rector for Faculty and Research will sign it and forward the duly signed form back to the Faculty Member who will inform all relevant stakeholders, including the student and the Programme Coordinator/Director.
3. A copy of this form must be kept by the Faculty Member, Programme Coordinator/Director and the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research.