

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 13 March 2024

# External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institutions:**  
University of Nicosia | University of Patras
- **Cities:** Nicosia, Cyprus | Patra, Greece
- **Schools/Faculties (if applicable):** School of Education | Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Departments/Sectors:** Department of Education | Department of Philology
- **Programme of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

## In Greek:

Ολυμπιακές Σπουδές: Πολιτισμός, Αθλητισμός και Εκπαίδευση (1,5 χρόνια / 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό πρόγραμμα σπουδών με το Πανεπιστήμιο της Πάτρας)

**In English:** Olympic Studies: Culture, Sports and Education (1,5 academic years/18 months, 90 ECTS, master's degree, E-Learning, Joint programme with the University of Patras)

- **Language of instruction:** English

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

- **Programme’s status:** Choose status

- **Concentrations (if any):**

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Concentrations

## A. Introduction

The visit in Nicosia and meetings with representatives of the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras took place on March 11, 2024 (09:00 - 18:00 local time) with all members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) present.

It began with a presentation by the Rector of the University of Nicosia and the representative of the University of Patras and continued with a brief presentation of the Departments and Schools.

The meetings were run by the people of the Program's Coordination Committee, who responded to questions from the EEC and other representatives of the institution. There was a fundamental meeting with the teaching staff and the distance learning unit to evaluate the program, followed by two other meetings, one with former students (from other online programmes) and one with the administrative staff. In the meetings, all aspects related to the program were addressed.

The meeting ended with a presentation of some preliminary conclusions of this Report to the representatives of the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras. These aspects will be detailed in this Report.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Emilio Fernandez Peña</b>	Chair - Professor	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
<b>Emanuele Isidori</b>	Professor	University of Rome Foro Italico
<b>Dimitris Gargalianos</b>	Professor	Democritos University of Thrace, Greece
<b>Christothea Herodotou</b>	Professor	The Open University UK
<b>Stella Koupepidou</b>	Student	University of Cyprus



## C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

### **Sub-areas**

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance**
- 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**
- 1.3 Public information**
- 1.4 Information management**

### **1.1 Policy for quality assurance**

#### Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

### **1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**

#### Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams and assignments' content correspond to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
  - *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*

- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

### 1.4 Information management

#### Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities*

### Findings

Policies of internal quality assurance are well organized; they are headed by the rector and connected in two parts: with the Senate of the university, and the Director. There is an Academic Compliance Office reporting to the Director that manages this issue. On the other hand, the Internal Quality Assurance Committee connects with the School Quality Assurance Committee and the Quality Assurance Department, which is the beginning of the process. The program's quality assurance policy is formalized and made available to the public. It encourages teaching, administrative, and student participation in quality assurance, safeguards academic freedom and integrity, is watchful for academic fraud, and opposes any

form of intolerance or discrimination against staff or students. Finally, it supports the organization of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations, and processes.

The proposed master's program in Olympic Studies is ambitiously conceived but falls short in delivering an integrated and holistic educational journey that truly captures the diverse essence of Olympic Studies. The curriculum's fragmentation undermines the development of a comprehensive understanding of the Olympic studies culture, revealing substantial deficiencies in both content and pedagogical approach. This results in an educational experience that lacks depth and fails to provide a thorough exploration of the subject matter.

Moreover, the program's vocational relevance and potential career paths for graduates remain vague, creating uncertainty regarding the tangible benefits of obtaining the degree. This lack of clarity diminishes the program's appeal to students seeking not only academic enhancement but also real-life employability possibilities.

Despite the teaching staff's notable expertise in their respective fields, there is a noticeable void in research experience, or contributions specifically related to Olympic Studies. This gap raises concerns about the program's capacity to offer in-depth instruction rooted in the latest research and thoughtful leadership pertinent to the Olympic context, thus restricting students' exposure to innovative ideas and advancements in the field.

The program's interactions with key entities in Olympic education, including the International Olympic Committee, the 206 National Olympic Committees, the International Olympic Academy, the >150 National Olympic Academies, and the overarching Olympic system, is not existent. Strengthening ties with them is crucial for providing students with insightful perspectives on the organizational, political, educational, and communicative aspects of the Olympic Movement.

The absence of specialized online mentorship further diminishes the program's ability to support a nurturing and engaging learning environment. The presented learning objects, characterized by their superficiality and inadequate structure, fail to effectively facilitate the learning process, significantly impeding knowledge acquisition.

The current state of the master's program in Olympic Studies reveals critical flaws affecting its integrity and efficacy. These issues span the core curriculum's structure, the faculty's alignment with Olympic studies, and the program's engagement with essential Olympic educational bodies. Without substantial enhancements in these key areas, the program stands to remain a mere aspiration rather than a distinguished centre of Olympic education excellence.

As the programme has not yet been approved, there is no relevant public information to access on the university's website. Yet, during the visit and in the material provided, student selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, the joint qualification awarded (University of Nicosia and University of Patras) and teaching, learning and assessment procedures were discussed. No information about the university's key performance indicators was provided. There was no information available about the profile of prospective student population either, as no market analysis was performed to understand the market and assess employability opportunities following completion of the programme.

### Strengths



- There is a detailed quality assurance policy in place that supports teachers, students, and admin staff.
- Selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, and joint qualification awarded were in place.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The master's program in Olympic Studies reveals critical flaws affecting its integrity and efficacy related to core curriculum's structure, the faculty's alignment with Olympic Studies, and the program's engagement with essential Olympic educational bodies.
- There is a need to understand the profile of prospective students and employability opportunities following completion of the proposed programme by researching the market in both Cyprus and Greece, and internationally if applicable.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Non-compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Partially compliant

## 2. Student – centered learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

### Sub-areas

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
- 2.2 Practical training
- 2.3 Student assessment
- 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

### 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

#### Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

### 2.2 Practical training

### Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support the achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

## **2.3 Student assessment**

### Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

## **2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

### Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - *Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)*
  - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

### Findings

Regarding the content guides it must be stated that the study program has serious deficiencies in its structure that affect the whole. There is no coherence or a guiding thread that links the different courses together. This could be linked to the total lack of previous experience of the coordinators and teaching staff in Olympic Studies, which we will discuss in detail in the corresponding section.

In the structure of content offered in documentation provided there is no coherence between the content offered. The syllabus and the topics addressed in it are not part of a well-connected, cohesive teaching-learning system with an integral and clear guiding thread. It is rather an addition of unrelated topics that respond to the previous research experience of the available professors, none of whom offer research or teaching experience in the field of Olympic Studies, its culture, its education or in the field of Olympic sports. This leads to topics not being offered that the Olympic Studies experts who make up the EEC consider fundamental and will be mentioned later.

As an example of the serious deficiencies of the project, the programme objective number 5 is clear and, therefore, easy to evaluate, but it is not met: “identify and classify the basic periods in history of the Olympic Games and their social and cultural characteristics”: The journey to the history of Games is not proportional and its design seems to be based on anecdotal criteria and not a solid academic comprehensive vision. For example, an entire week (Week 4) is dedicated to the so-called “1936 Nazi Games” and only one week the 1948 Games are dedicated to the present in a week (Week 5), titled “The Global Olympics after World War II”.

In addition, this topic is called “The Political Economy of the Games.” The concept of Political Economy has clearly ideological overtones associated with a Marxist vision and does not agree well with the concept that is presented later, that of the Commercialization of Games, a term associated with the most exacerbated economic liberalism. This postmodern vision, which does not maintain continuity and coherence between sample concepts, is an example of the contradictions of the proposal.

On the other hand, among the objectives it is worrying that Olympic education does not have an objective separate from others, since it is an area, as it was pointed out, of significant importance in Olympic Studies. The part dedicated to “Digital cultural environments: Virtual Exhibitions and Competitions” appears in the program as something totally disconnected from the rest without any connection with the previous and subsequent courses. Its long duration has not been sufficiently justified and the relationship with the Olympic Studies does not appear justified either.

The course “Digital Sport Communication” presents disjointed content that does not address the key topics related to the Communication of the Olympics. It does not mention anything regarding the communication structure of the Olympic Games, the role of the Olympic Channel, the audiovisual rights of the Games, or social media in the Olympic Games. As in many other cases, it does not address the specificities of the Olympic Games communication and focuses on talking about generalities without any internal continuity or vision of the whole. These are fundamental issues, since the Olympic Games is a global phenomenon, because of the preponderance of television and the media in general in their dissemination and financing. The bibliography once again shows this lack of knowledge. Only three bibliographical references not completely related to the Olympic Games and three more as suggested bibliography are a poor contribution in this course.

The courses do not address fundamental topics in Olympic Studies: Pierre de Coubertin, creator of the modern Olympic Games, is not discussed. This topic could be argued to be present in the spirit of the curriculum but deserves a separate course. Associated with de Coubertin is the concept of the Olympic Idea, which is also not present. A detailed academic critique reveals that the program merely skims the surface of the rich pedagogical debate underpinning Pierre de Coubertin's conceptualization and practical application of the Olympic idea. This superficial treatment overlooks the nuanced discussions that have evolved over time, mainly how modern experts in Olympic education have interpreted and adapted the Olympic idea.

Moreover, the course content significantly lacks a thorough exploration of the social pedagogy of Olympism and the socio-educational functions performed by institutions promoting Olympic education. This oversight is emblematic of a broader neglect of the critical role that these institutions play in disseminating Olympic values and fostering a global community aligned with the spirit of Olympism.

Compounding with these content-related issues is the clear deficiency in the Master's staff's experience with educational methodologies specific to the teaching of Olympic and moral education. The program fails to incorporate or leverage a variety of pedagogical tools that are fundamental to effective value-based education, such as moral dilemmas, experiential learning, storytelling and role models, project-based learning, Socratic dialogue, value clarification exercises, and autobiographical writing. This gap not only limits the program's ability to offer a multidimensional learning experience but also undermines its potential to instill the Olympic values deeply and meaningfully in its participants.

Another glaring omission in the Master's program is the lack of depth in exploring the legal culture surrounding the historical, cultural, legal, and social aspects of Olympism and its evolution from antiquity to the present day. This absence of fundamental knowledge in the domain of Olympic studies prevents a comprehensive and coherent examination of the concept of 'agon'—the competitive spirit that gave birth to the ancient legal and sporting culture, which, in turn, has had significant repercussions on the structure of modern law.

While the master's program in Olympic Studies purports to educate its students on Olympic values and ideals, it does so in a superficial way and lacks academic rigor. The program's deficiencies in exploring the pedagogical underpinnings of the Olympic idea, its failure to utilize diverse and effective educational methodologies, and its omission of critical discussions on the legal and cultural legacy of Olympism significantly detract from its academic and educational integrity. To truly honor the legacy of Pierre de Coubertin and contribute meaningfully to the field of Olympic education, the program must undertake substantial revisions to its curriculum, pedagogical approach, and faculty expertise.

Nothing is commented on another fundamental issue, which is the structure of the Olympic Movement, its actors, its institutions, its governance. Also, strikingly serious is the absence of a topic dedicated to the Olympic Charter and the Olympic law. All these topics would provide the structure of the program with the continuity and intellectual and rational framework that it totally lacks.

The course related to sports management is the only one that, due to its structure, has a coherent design. However, in the program it appears as optional.

There is a distance learning unit in place with two directors: a) Director of e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit, and b) Director of Faculty Training and Development Unit. Courses follow a 12-week structure with both synchronous and asynchronous sessions. As described in the document provided, synchronous sessions are expected to be 9 teaching hours and offered via Webex. These are recommended to be

divided into either 3 sessions of 3 hours each, or 6 sessions of 1.5 hours each. Teleconferences are planned to be optional and accommodate a maximum of 30 students. Four sessions are planned to be offered to ensure there is a place for all students to attend (they anticipate having 120 students when the programme is advertised).

The EEC requested and was provided with access to one course online (hosted on Moodle). As explained, the rest of the courses have not yet been implemented online. In the online course provided, teleconferences were not allocated across specific weeks, making it difficult for students to identify when a teleconference is available for them. Also, most material were uploaded across weeks in the form of PDFs (opening in a new window) (see recommendations below). Training, guidance, and support are provided to students as to how to use the online tools and the online library. There is provision in place to accommodate students with special needs when attending a course online.

The assessment framework is consistent across all courses and includes 20% interactive weekly activities, 20% individual assignment and 60% final exam. While the assessment criteria include details about objectives and structure, marking criteria are not stated across all courses, and when mentioned they are only briefly described. In addition, a marking rubric (grading policy – criteria for gaining an A, B, C etc.) were found in a very few cases of assignments.

A study guide has been produced for each course, which aligns with the e-learning methodology. Another different issue is the content of it, which is discussed above. Student to student interaction is facilitated through weekly interactive activities such as forums, wikis, online group discussions/debates and role playing. Quizzes are also used in some of the courses. Simulations, online games or visits to virtual museums have not been considered to improve the student experience and enhance online interactivity. Study guides are consistently designed in terms of structure. What has been observed is that they do not follow the recommended template the DLU is proposing in their guide, in which e.g., the formatting is clearer by using bullet points and tables, and by offering details about the marking policy. Also, in some courses, there are no details of how students should use the forums to enable communication and discussion between students. Self-assessment activities were found in only a very few of the courses. There is no provision of practical training, such as the offering of internships to students.

### Strengths

- A distance learning unit is in place with two Directors responsible for the pedagogical side of e-learning and associated staff and student training.
- Weekly interactive activities are proposed in study guides and assessed with 20% of the final mark.
- Appropriate technological tools are used to deliver the sources online including Moodle, Webex and an email service.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Lack of coherence across proposed courses. This needs a new structure and content of courses.
- Absence of fundamental subjects such as Pierre de Coubertin ideal, the structure of the Olympic Movement, its governance and law should be included.
- Marking criteria should be clearly stated and explained for all marked assignments and accompanied by a marking rubric.

- The study guide template of DLU should be used to improve the presentation and readability of study guide content.
- Clear and detailed instructions need to be provided to students as to how to take part in weekly interactive activities such as online discussions, role playing and forums.
- Self-assessment activities and a self-correction guide need to be used across all courses.
- Innovative online tools such as games, simulations and virtual museum tours should be considered.
- Material should be integrated in the body of Moodle, creating a seamless learning experience by navigating within a single window.
- The optional offering of student internships would enhance connections to the job market and facilitate future employment.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centered teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Non-compliant



### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### **Sub-areas**

- 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**
- 3.2 Teaching staff number and status**
- 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

##### Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

#### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

##### Standards

- *The number of teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

#### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

##### Standards



- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

### Findings

The number of professors is correct as well as their status: seven professors are coming from the University of Nicosia and four from the University of Patras.

In a master's degree that opens the door to doctoral studies, it is required that the teaching team has a specialized research and solid teaching career on the topic that the program deals with. According to the European Guidelines "Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff."

Even though, neither the master's coordinators nor any of the lecturers have any publication, participation in a conference or research project related to Olympic Studies. This has undoubtedly affected the proposal of content offered and which has been commented on in the corresponding section. Sometimes, it seems as if the proposed contents were more guided by the specialization of the available professors than by the epistemological, academic, and intellectual reality of what a master's degree in Olympic Studies should be.

This does not call into question the good CV qualifications of the professors and their knowledge in their specialized areas. Specifically, the coordinators of the master are not related with the Olympic Studies field. They have not published anything on the subject. They have neither participated in any research project on Olympic Studies nor they have any teaching experience in the issue.

On the other hand, the field of Olympic education has a prominent character in Olympic Studies but none of the good number of professors and researchers has made any research contribution in this field. The most prominent figures in this area are Roland Naul, Ian Culpan, Norbert Müller, Conrado Duránte, Jim Parry, among many others. Surprisingly, none of them appear in the bibliography of the courses.

The same can be said in the case of the history of the Ancient and the Modern Olympic Games. There is an overwhelming majority of experts in education, in Ancient History, Greek literature and special education, but there is no alignment of expertise specific to the concepts and the tradition of Olympic Studies. The professors lack specialized knowledge in accordance with research in Olympic Studies. This disproportion must be considered as a new negative fact in a master's degree on a subject, in which the contemporary has a predominant role.

From the special teaching faculty, that is, professors with no stable connection with the university, only one member adds expertise in some aspects of sport management, with a completely different profile from the rest of the teaching staff. However, he does not have published or management experience related to the Olympic world, although he has experience with soccer. It is anecdotal that another of the professors coordinated the transportation of the Olympic flame in a small Greek municipality during the Athens Games in 2004.

The DLU organises and offers a range of staff trainings including faculty pedagogical training, faculty research training, technical training, as well as current topics in higher education. Training sessions are optional, with some staff attending these back in 2019. There is no requirement for staff to repeat some of the training, especially training related to the use of innovative tools to teach online that would update skills in teaching online.

### Strengths

- The teaching staff has a good international CV in their specific areas, such as history, philology, special education and dance and arts.
- The teaching numbers are appropriate for this joint programme.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The absence of research experience in coordinators and professors is not something that can be addressed in the short term. This is a fundamental structural problem that decisively determines the quality of the program content. The recommendation would be to reformulate the program by seeking association with a new European university with expert researchers in Olympic Studies. The University of Nicosia has consolidated experience in online teaching and should seek, together with the University of Patras, a partnership with another European university with experts in Olympic Studies. Otherwise, we do not see this program as viable as it is formulated due to the lack of expertise in its teaching staff regarding research in Olympic Studies.
- A plan should be in place to ensure all staff involved in teaching the programme attend to online training and this is repeated/rephrased every couple of years.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></p>
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<b>3.1</b>	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
<b>3.2</b>	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
<b>3.3</b>	Synergies of teaching and research	Non-compliant

#### 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

**Sub-areas**

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
- 4.2 Student progression**
- 4.3 Student recognition**
- 4.4 Student certification**

#### 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

#### 4.2 Student progression

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

#### 4.3 Student recognition

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

#### 4.4 Student certification

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

#### Findings

We had the opportunity to meet with seven students who are attending or have completed other distance learning programmes at the university. As the programme under evaluation is not running yet, there were no students from the programme attending the respective session. During our recent discussion regarding their experience with distance learning, we primarily focused on addressing concerns related to distance learning and evaluating the efficiency of online assessment tools, as well as the effectiveness of communication channels with the supportive faculty and administrative assistance.

The panel of students unanimously agreed that the online assessment tools provided by the institution are highly efficient. They reported no significant issues with the assessment process and expressed satisfaction with the ease of use and accessibility of these tools. The students praised the communication with the supportive faculty and administrative support, describing it as "excellent." They highlighted the promptness of responses and the up-to-date support provided by the administrative staff and the faculty, which significantly contributed to their overall learning experience. They emphasized the importance of clear and coherent communication channels, which greatly enhances their learning experience and collaboration with peers. The panel noted the feasibility of interconnectivity between students and faculty members. They found it very easy to interact through social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, and not so much via forums to complete their group assignments.

Faculty members consistently provided students with feedback on their assignments in less than a week following submission, ensuring timely guidance and improvement opportunities. Moreover, students' enquiries are addressed within 48 hours or less, demonstrating the institution's commitment to providing responsive support and assistance. Students who experienced distance learning expressed that it provides them with the flexibility to work part-time or even full-time, while pursuing their studies. They appreciated the flexibility regarding the submission of assignments and the availability of support staff to assist with any technical problems or guidance needed. Therefore, feedback provided by the panel of students highlights the success of the institution's distance learning processes, particularly in terms of online assessment tools, communication with the administration team, and timely feedback and support provided by faculty members.

Staff intends to use learning analytics from Moodle to collect and monitor students' progress online. There is a plan (as described by the DLU) where Moodle data will be emailed weekly to staff (every Wednesday).

Strengths

- Online assessment tools were reported to be efficient.
- Digital communication with supportive administrative staff and faculty members was described as helpful and appropriate.
- Interconnectivity between students and faculty members is considered efficient.
- Feedback and support are provided continuously and effectively.
- Flexibility and support for full-time or part-time employment is beneficial for distant learning students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Forums should be systematically used in teaching as a core means of communication and collaboration between students.
- Regarding the learning progression, a student support policy should be formulated to ensure students are regularly monitored by their tutors and support is provided on a timely manner.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></p>
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4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

## 5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

### Sub-areas

- 5.1 Teaching and learning resources
- 5.2 Physical resources
- 5.3 Human support resources
- 5.4 Student support

### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities for each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance with international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

## 5.2 Physical resources

### Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

## 5.3 Human support resources

### Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

## 5.4 Student support

### Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

### Findings

Weekly interactive activities are scheduled for all courses. They take a range of forms, such as online debates and problem solving, they include reflections on videos and images, and they link to real-life scenarios. Simulations, games and virtual museum tours have not yet been explored as a means of improving the interactive learning experience. A distance learning unit is in place responsible for study materials and the provision of online training. The staff has considered and planned for supporting the anticipated number of students (120 students) by offering multiple teleconferences on the same topic (see also Section 2).

Students can access the university's library online using their university's credentials. The library has a range of resources including e-books, journals and conference papers. As explained by the library staff, a guide with relevant e-books, journals and other online resources will be prepared for the specific programme and shared with students to help them easily navigate and identify relevant online resources for their studies. Students receive training about the use of library services.

The human support resources were found to be exceptional with expert administrative staff, counsellors and other advisors employed. Student support services include among others the Centre for Research & Counselling Services, the Student Affairs Department, & Academic Advising and Support Departments.

Administrative staff is aware of the requirements of online learning and have in place measures for effectively supporting students who may have special needs and require extra support.

Strengths

- Provision for weekly interactive assignments is found across all courses.
- Library services are in place with relevant support by librarians.
- Human support resources are well organised and sufficient.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The use of innovative tools, such as online games, simulations and virtual museum tours, would benefit the online delivery of this programme.
- Students' mobility within and across institutions should be specified for this programme and encouraged.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant



## D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC evaluated the program considering the documents provided before and after the visit, as well as the communication with staff during the on-site visit. The programme was found to have good standards in terms of the plan in place for delivering and managing online course material and activities, including provision for extensive staff training opportunities in eLearning and other relevant areas and effective human and digital support for students.

However, the program presents two major weaknesses that we consider fundamental: the total absence of expert teaching staff in Olympic Studies and, therefore, a very poor design of the study program, a consequence of this lack of specialization on the part of the coordinators and teachers of this master.

Olympic Studies is a field of knowledge that began in the 1980s and investigates in a multidisciplinary way the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games as a sporting, cultural, communicative, social, legal, educative domain, among others. They have become a field of research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge that already has a consolidated tradition.

To reinforce the argument that Olympic Studies is a consolidated rich field of knowledge with plenty of scientific recourses and materials, we offer the following indicative list:

The International Olympic Academy (IOA), which has organized international sessions on different issues related with the Olympic Studies in >60 years (<https://www.ioa.org.gr/portal/activities#activity>), and has published many volumes of proceedings (<https://www.ioa.org.gr/the-academy/articles-publications>).

The 67 Centers of Olympic Study in the world, all of them linked to universities on the five continents (<https://stillmedab.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Olympic-Studies-Centre/Academic-Activities-and-Network/Olympic-Studies-monitoring/Academic-Olympic-Studies-and-Research-Centres-in-the-world.pdf>.)

The >150 National Olympic Academies functioning in the world (<https://www.ioa.org.gr/the-academy/noas>).

The thousands of items of scientific / academic production:

- Journals (<https://olympicstudies.org/> - <https://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/?id=jos>)
- Scientific articles (i.e. Ivy, V. (2023). Trans women are women, and sport is a human right. *Journal of Olympic Studies*, 4(2), 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.5406/26396025.4.2.02>)  
<https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/uip/jos/article-abstract/4/2/3/382096/Trans-Women-Are-Women-and-Sport-Is-a-Human-Right?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- Books (i.e. <https://www.routledge.com/Olympic-Education-An-international-review/Naul-Binder-Rychtecky-Culpan/p/book/9781138369078>, - <https://www.ioa.org.gr/post/olympic-movement-and-international-politics>),
- Other master's programs (i.e. Master of Arts in Olympic Studies, offered by Centre d' Estudis Olímpics, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (<https://ceo.uab.cat/en/courses/master-olympic-studies/>))
- Conference proceedings (i.e. <https://research-center.juntendo.ac.jp/jcrws/en/womeninsport/internationalconference/ioc/>)

- Online courses (i.e. <https://www.itfeducation.com/moodle/course/index.php?categoryid=25>)
- Diplomas (i.e. <https://www.ioa.org.gr/post/advanced-olympic-studies-diploma-in-bahrain>)
- Podcasts (i.e. <https://soundcloud.com/press-marketing/journal-of-olympic-studies-1>)
- Events (i.e. <https://olympics.com/museum/explore/programmes/olympian-artists/beijing-2022>)
- Charters on sport of multinational organizations (i.e. Council of Europe [2021]. European Sports Charter - [https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a42107](https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a42107))
- Works on sport of multinational organizations (i.e. European Commission [2007]. *White Paper on Sport* - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=EN>)

etc.

The World Olympic Library (<https://library.olympics.com/>).

The LA84 Foundation Digital Library (<https://digital.la84.org/>).

Those who know the Olympic Studies field of knowledge follow the pre-existing tradition, and innovate, create the new, in a dialogue with the past, with what others have done and break with traditions on some occasions, justifying the need for a leap forward. At the universities, the innovation is always a fruit of a detailed study of the past knowledge and research, and teaching is a specialized are feed-back each other. Good teaching cannot exist without specific research about the master's knowledge area.

However, the proposed program lacks the necessary feedback and enrichment that the combination of research in Olympic Studies and its teaching brings. The EEC considers this fact fundamental, as it dramatically affects the structure of the program, the syllabus, and the interactive design offered to future students. As commented in previous sections, the program's design has a total lack of coherence in its contents. Probably this is due to the lack of research tradition in the Olympic Movement and Olympic Games of any of the coordinators and professors. As described in the document, none of them can demonstrate any academic publication or teaching experience in Olympic Studies.

In this report, the part dedicated to the synergies of teaching staff between research and teaching occupies a point in section 3.3, but qualitatively it should have a determining weight because this shapes the design of a program in an area of knowledge, in which teachers have not previously worked on. It is a decisive structural issue that seriously questions the quality of the content that is going to be taught. This fact questions its viability as a serious academic project that should be put into practice.

The absence of research experience in coordinators and professors is not something that can be addressed in the short term. This is a fundamental structural problem that decisively determines the quality of the program content, as we have mentioned. The recommendation would be to reformulate the courses by seeking association with a new European university with expert researchers in Olympic Studies. The University of Nicosia has consolidated experience in online teaching and should seek, together with the University of Patras in classical studies, and a partnership with another European university with experts in Olympic Studies is fundamental to create a meaningful program. Otherwise, the proposed program will not be viable.

Finally, the program does not adequately describe the job opportunities and employability possibilities of future students, apart from the continuation in doctoral studies.



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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The EEC would like to thank all university staff involved in the process of evaluation for their time and availability during the visit and also express their gratitude to Ms Droso Lavithi for organising and facilitating a smooth evaluation process.



## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Emilio Fernandez Peña</b>	
<b>Emanuele Isidori</b>	
<b>Dimitris Gargalianos</b>	
<b>Christothea Herodotou</b>	
<b>Stella Koupepidou</b>	

**Date:** 13 March 2024